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THE WHISPERED CRIMES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE EUROPEAN AND PACIFIC THEATER OF WORLD WAR II

By

CHANNING MORRISON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of History

Department of History

Mandy Link, Ph.D., Committee Chair, College of Arts and Sciences

College of Arts and Sciences

The University of Texas at Tyler
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This is to certify that the Master's Thesis/Doctoral Dissertation of

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ii

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Title: The Whispered Crimes of Sexual Violence in the European and Pacific Theater of World War II

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This thesis addresses sexual violence in World War II in both the European and Pacific Theater. Often, the violence of these War Crimes tends to be overshadowed and not talked about. This thesis examines the stories of women, children, and men who suffered from sexual brutality in World War II and how nations try to hide or justify acts of rape and violence. By using as case studies the nations of Japan, Germany, the United States of America, and the Soviet Union, and how they either committed sexual acts of violence or handled rape cases when it came to the soldiers, this thesis analyzes the use of sexual violence during World War II to better understand its use as a tactic in modern war as well as the impact on the victims and survivors.

Contents

Chapter		Page
	INTRODUCTION…….....…….....1	
1	CHAPTER 1: JAPAN …….....…….…….…….....15	
2	CHAPTER 2: GERMANY …….....……..…..…..45	
3	CHAPTER 3: THE UNITED STATES & THE SOVIET UNION ……...…….....……..…….....70	
	CONCLUSION……..……..…..…96	
	BIBLIOGRAPHY…….....102	

Introduction

World War II was a time of devastation and destruction, with much of the world clashing against each other. Death and torture reigned across the European and Pacific theaters, bringing chaos and bloodshed to the mid-twentieth century. Acts of violence and inhumane crimes occurred across the warring continents, where soldiers went into combat for their own countries and often justified acts of cruelty for the war effort. Those men suffered in their own ways as they faced death every single day and shouldered the weight of their homelands on their shoulders.

War brings out the worst in humanity, and World War II is no exception. This war brought to light some of the most horrendous acts against humanity. The Allied powers prosecuted Axis war crimes in both Tokyo and Nuremberg after 1945, bringing some sense of justice to some of the people whom the Axis powers victimized. Due to the number of war crimes committed against civilians, in 1949, the Geneva Convention was updated with a new set of rules and regulations on subjects regarding hostages and rape victims because of the brutality of the war. The UN also came up with the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948 after the war because of the mass human brutality in hopes of preventing another war crime atrocity that went on in World War II.[1]

The Axis were the aggressors in the war. Germany's invasion of neighboring countries and mass genocide in the Holocaust and outside of it were acts of aggression. Japan was also an aggressor as they, too, had their own human rights violations—such as Unit 731, which tested

[1] United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime Genocide*, 2015, https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/1948-convention.shtml.

and experimented on people—and their mistreatment of POWs. The amount of war crimes Germany and Japan committed were so numerous that, despite efforts at trials, after the war some perpetrators were never found and held responsible for their past crimes. This meant that some war crimes, like rape and sexual assault, were pushed lower on the list of punishable offenses. This led such crimes to be less publicly discussed, primarily due to the taboo nature of rape, and that relative silence extended to academics until the late twentieth century.

The Axis and the Allies were both guilty of sexually violating people. Rape and sexual violence in warfare have been a complex subject for historians and the public. It is safe to acknowledge it has happened; it is war, after all, and rape is often a tool of war. However, in the postwar trials, only a select few were genuinely punished for this act. Rape is one of the most violating and intense crimes that could happen to someone in or out of war. It is a profoundly invasive and truly personal traumatic event. It is a weapon used to control and have power over people. Rape leaves scars beyond the wound it creates; often, the victims stay silent or hide it. Witnesses sometimes talk about what they have seen. The likelihood of them discussing their experiences is a coin flip. They have every right to keep to themselves; it is a highly sensitive subject today and historically. Those World War II survivors who were willing to talk about the topic and what they experienced were much appreciated by scholars and interested people in general for speaking about what they endured or witnessed during this war. However, such accounts are less numerous than veteran accounts, given the stigma surrounding rape both during and after the war. Susan Brownmiller, an American journalist, wrote *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* about the history of rape, published in 1993, creating a foundation of the study of rape and an idea of how it is used as a weapon against others.[2]

[2] Susan Brownmiller, *Against our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (Ballantine Books,1993).

> A weapon, unless one is familiar with weapons, is likely to produce a shock reaction in any person, male or female. Choking, unless one knows how to break the hold, can be even more effective, for nothing terrorizes faster than inability to breathe. In addition to the normal reaction to fear that is produced in women by the presence of an aggressing male intent on violence, the sheer physical presence of a number of potential assailants would serve to terrorize most females or convince them that resistance would be futile, unless, of course, they knew how to fight. But the reasoning process, even in one-to-one situations without the presence of a weapon or a threat of death is necessarily rational under stress.[3]

Many who endured such trauma did not survive the war to tell their stories. The stories of the murdered, either told by another or lost in time, render their voices and experiences silenced within the many accounts. There are pictures of those who died being horribly violated, but depending on where the image was taken, their name is most likely not mentioned, making the only thing known about them is what the viewer sees.

This visual record can bring complications for scholars working on war crimes and sensitive subjects in history. Pictures can be a valuable tool to understand and visualize atrocities. There is also a downside to using imagery to research when it comes to victims of brutalization. Those who are dead are unable to speak or give their consent to the use of images of their mutilated dead bodies, leading to an ethical and moral issue. It is up to the researcher to decide if they want to use such violating and vulnerable images of a person's victimized deceased body for their research. Some researchers might opt not to say the person's name in the image to protect the victims they are showcasing. In this thesis, there will be no images of individuals. It is such a delicate subject, and there are sensitive images that could be revictimizing to the victims and their families, who had no say in their bodies being taken and photographed.

Regardless of the difficulty in obtaining these accounts, these victims' stories matter. Rape as a tool of terror has long been a feature of warfare. Its use in World War II by both Axis

[3] Susan Brownmiller, *Against our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (Ballantine Books, 1993), 459-460.

and Allied powers demonstrates the need to understand these victims' and survivors' stories to understand the horrors of the war experience better.[4] The Axis and Allies contributed to rape, a crime rarely, if ever, punished, a crime whose prosecution depended on where or who was bringing the "retribution" for the victim. Soldiers and the court systems found ways to cover for their brethren because if no crime was reported or legalized, it "never happened".

This thesis addresses sexual violence against women, children, and even men in both theaters. The core question this thesis addresses is how did Japan, Germany, America, and the Soviet Union get away with and justify rape while using it as a weapon throughout the war? What were the similarities between the predators and their reasonings? What are the parallels or differences between both theaters? Most importantly, who were the victims and the survivors? What exactly are their stories, and how did they attempt to survive?

This thesis relies heavily on testimonies and first-person narratives to tell the history of what happened to those who suffered from the sexual violence of the war. This research attempts to resurrect their voices despite the taboo and uneasy nature of the topic. The hope is for the reader to see these women, children, and men as people, as humans who are more than a number or statistic. This thesis is an attempt to portray those victims and survivors as the people they were.

The sexual violence of World War II is a complicated subject to study; there are many books and journals that discuss different events that happened during the war. Most of them, when talking about war crimes, gravitate to the non-sexual crimes of the Holocaust, which has several branches of different atrocities. This thesis will discuss the sexual war crimes of multiple countries. Imperial Japan, in their conquest of much of East Asia, made the Comfort Women

[4] Mary Louise Roberts*, What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

System, creating the largest sex slave trade system in World War II. Many German soldiers engaged in rape of women, girls, and boys regardless of the racial laws imposed on them, leaving a trail of traumatized civilians across their European conquests. Allied troops also committed sexual assault. Some American servicemen raped women as they liberated Europe, and soldiers of the Red Army have become infamous for the mass rape of women as they moved toward Berlin during the last months of the war, most infamously in the Rape of Berlin. Still, there is too little understood of this sexual brutality on the side of the Allies. While commonalities between the Allies and Axis powers in the war are hard to come by, the use of rape and sexual assault, while often manifesting differently, were common across combatant nations. Sexual assaults and rape were used in different ways as a method of control throughout World War II, whether the nations were Axis or Ally, European or Pacific Theater.

It is relatively difficult to gather information about the topic, let alone testimonies. Likewise, historiographically, the topic of sexual violence is a relatively new topic of study for World War II and certainly when looking at Allied powers like America. Finding information about this topic took a lot of time and research. The subject is dark, and many people have difficulty studying it. There are also limitations to how much countries are willing to express what actually happened. Given cultural taboos on the nature of sex crimes and the postwar need to punish the Axis powers, few academics or survivors addressed these events until decades later, if at all. Another struggle is access to sources, as many have been recorded in a multitude of languages and have not yet been translated into English. In addition, many books are limited editions that are barely sold or are difficult to access. Often, the books that try to engage with this difficult topic are, unfortunately for academic historians, historical fiction. Given these silences, this thesis relies on a smaller selection of academic works.

This thesis relies heavily on firsthand testimonies, diaries, and journals to provide the reader with the victim's perspective. It was challenging to search and gather different narratives, but every story found is different and related to the subject discussed in the section of each chapter. However, finding an aggressor's viewpoint was even more difficult, as few would want to incriminate themselves even decades later. This thesis primarily uses the victim's perspective over the perpetrator's ideology and views; if possible, the soldier's first-person interpretations were added to the chapter so the reader could analyze the perpetrator's perspective. This approach is not designed in any way, shape, or form to justify these men's acts of violence but rather to contextualize and understand why women were targeted, to understand the victims' stories and what had happened to them. Through the views of the aggressors, we see how they used rape as a weapon and a way to control others and dominate the countries they had invaded.

When it comes to researching the topic of sexual violence in World War II, this thesis is organized by the location of where the acts took place in the war. Works on the European theater primarily look at the demographics of rape victims and sexual violators on the Western Front, focusing mainly on Germany, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Britain is rarely mentioned in such academic works and thus is not included in this thesis. This silence does not necessarily mean British servicemen were not involved in sexual assault, but there is little evidence to make such an argument. Many stories, accounts, and court cases were not made public, so in the war, perpetrators were able to get away with terrible acts.

When looking at the Allies, academic works on sexual war crimes primarily focus on the United States and the Soviet Union and how they had assaulted many different types of individuals throughout the course of the war. The American soldiers took advantage of the hospitality of the allied nations, such as French and British citizens. As stated before, it is more

difficult to find evidence from either perspective. J. Robert Lilly's book *Taken By Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II*[5] documents American troops' use of rape in Britain. He primarily focuses on the statistics and stories of American soldiers committing sexual violence in Europe that took place during the war. He also pointed out the racial injustice during World War II, with the US military or citizens blaming African American troops for rape and assault, especially in France.[6] Lilly's book showcases just how racially biased the court system was. The likelihood of African Americans being prosecuted or sentenced to death was higher than the percentage of white Americans, who often wound up going to prison for a short amount of time and released if sentenced guilty.[7] This will be discussed in chapter three.

Building on Lilly's study,[8] Mary Louise Roberts[9] and Miriam Gebhardt[10] pulled valuable research and sources. Both Roberts and Gebhardt have made advancements in studying the behavior of American GIs on the Western front when it comes to sex crimes; Roberts dedicated her studies to United States soldiers' post-D-Day advancement through Europe and their use of sexual violence against the French people. In Roberts's *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II*, French people portrayed Americans as assaulters of residents in Allied nations, revealing a more complex relationship between French citizens and American GIs than more heroic narratives suggest.[11] Roberts also discusses the treatment of United States troops towards their allies and how they got away with sexual assaults, violations, and the unjust

[5] J. Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
[6] Ibid., xvii.
[7] Ibid., 13.
[8] Ibid..
[9] Mary Louise Roberts*, What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).
[10] Miriam Gebhardt, *Crimes Unspoken: Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War II* (Polity Press, 2020).
[11] Mary Louise Roberts*, What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

treatment of blaming African American servicemen.[12] Roberts includes how the American soldiers treated French women and how French women treated the African American soldiers. Roberts identified the depth of racism and the judicial system process in French cities when it came to rapes and violence.[13] She detailed the unfairness of the situation that everyone was facing in the French towns where the rape and violations were going on throughout the war. The system of assault and violence was her founding argument that the American court systems valued French women over the US's own men just because of their different skin color.[14] There is also another important factor in looking into United States soldiers, which is not overly studied in the field, and that is male-on-male sexual assault that happened with American GIs. It is hardly covered, and in my research I found only a sliver of sources that discussed it, and it was barely mentioned in any books on sexual violence during wartime.

This did not mean it did not happen. R. M. Douglas, *The US Army, and Male Rape during the Second World War*[15] has played a critical role in talking about this subject. This thesis does use the case studies in Douglas's work as a primary source when discussing male-on-male sexual attacks. Douglas's research has been able to find up to seventy-five cases and goes over the court system of how they handled each case; his research is groundbreaking as there is so little information on such topics at this point. His article was published in 2021, which means there still needs to be more people to investigate this area of study.

Where Roberts looks at Allied troops' behavior in France, Miriam Gebhardt's *Crimes Unspoken: The Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War* focuses on the

[12] Ibid., 227.
[13] Ibid., 184.
[14] Ibid., 3.
[15] R. M. Douglas, *The US Army and Male Rape during the Second World War. Journal of Contemporary History, 56*(2), (2021): 268-293.

crimes of the Allies against German citizens.[16] Her book raises serious allegations of Americans going into homes and raping German women. Gebhardt also talks in depth about what the American soldiers were capable of doing during the war and how the American Allies treated their allying nations and intertwined with the Red Army, mixing the similarities in behavior between the Soviet Union and Americans. Her book uses both testimonies of the victims and aggressors, with the focus falling on the Red Army and American GIs. Her book brought to light sexual violence throughout the European continent and the fact that some American soldiers were just as cruel and harsh as some of the Soviets could be when it came to sexual violence. When it came to the Red Army and its brutality and sexual violations, Gebhardt's book is one of the best sources.

One of the best secondary sources on the experience of a German woman in the Soviet Rape of Berlin is from an author simply known as Anonymous. Anonymous's story, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in a Conquered City,* gives a more in-depth understanding of being forced to survive in a major event where women were brutalized. Through her words, the reader encounters other German women's stories and what she had to say about the Red Army. Anonymous's perspective tells how she survived, held on, and pushed forward. Her reason for writing the book was to inform people about what went on during the Rape of Berlin.[17] She published this book twice. The first time, in 1954, it was published in English, but the publisher pulled it from the public[18] after hostility from German readers who were not ready to hear such

[16] Miriam Gebhardt, *Crimes Unspoken: Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War II* (Polity Press, 2020) 11.
[17] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in a Conquered City* (Henry Holt and Company, 2005), xi.
[18] Ibid., xi.

stories about the war. The second time it was published was in 2005; it was released after she passed away, sparing her of any ramifications of the book.[19]

The main contributors for the overview of Germany are Sanja M. Hedgepeth, Rochelle G. Saidel, Dagmar Herzog, and Richard Plant. Each of these writers analyzed different parts of Nazi sexual violence and the reasons why they remained generally silenced, with scholars acknowledging the acts of rape and sexual violence by the German soldiers and the ideology that contributed to these events. In Plant's book, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals,* he analyzes the treatment of homosexuals and the way these men were treated in the concentration camps. Plant talks about sexual violence and the way certain men and even young boys were treated, using accounts of victims to discuss their stories.[20] Plants wrote his book wanting to inform his readers of homosexual violence and to end the silence.[21] In the book *Sexual Violence: Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust,* Sanja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel bring to light how Jewish women were treated in the Holocaust and the behavior of the German officers and guards, including the cruelty endured by both Jewish women and girls. The book addresses those who survived and those who died by their German guards and the reasons why. Even though the Nazi German ideology and rules prohibited any sexual activities between members of the "Aryan race" and Jews, German soldiers' sexual violence against Jewish women was not uncommon in the Holocaust.[22]

While these two books focus more on the Holocaust, Dagmar Herzog's book *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe Twentieth Century* goes outside of the Holocaust to

[19] Ibid., xi.
[20] Richard Plant, *The Nazi War Against Homosexuals: The Pink Triangle* (Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 15..
[21] Ibid., 19
[22] Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women During the Holocaust,* (University Press of New England, 2010), 1;15.

examine how the Nazi Germans treated their conquered territories, the reaction to the country's invasion, and the way the people handled the Germans coming in. Herzog explains the ideology of the soldiers and what the country faced as the Nazis Germans took control as well as the brutality of it all. Herzog's book exposes different sexual tendencies the soldiers had in different occupied countries.

For the Japanese military and their conquest across Asian countries, the most influential historian on topics such as the "Comfort Women" is Yuki Tanaka. He wrote two books that talked about Comfort Women: *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* and *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the U.S. Occupation* both of which mention the atrocities that the Comfort Women experienced.[23] Both books go into depth about the sexual war crimes the Japanese committed during the war, explicitly detailing the Comfort System. His second book, *Japan's Comfort Women*, also goes into more detail about what Japanese and American servicemen did to the women forced into sexual slavery.[24] Tanaka is usually referenced in multiple books or at least cited when studying the Comfort System. In *Hidden Horrors*, he aims for people to understand the war crimes the Japanese soldiers committed during World War II. At the same time, *Japan Comfort Women* argues that the military system used sex as a means of control.[25]

Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* is another key work. Chang studies the creation of the Comfort System but also gives the perspective of the soldiers and their mentality, demonstrating just how harsh the Japanese soldiers were in their use

[23] Yuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation* (Routledge, 2002).
[24] Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Westview Press, 1996), 7.
[25] Yuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation* (Routledge, 2002), 1.

of both general physical and sexual violence.[26] She details the Japanese military's treatment of the Chinese people in Nanking and the sexual acts they committed to the Comfort Women in the following years.[27]

Peipei Qiu, Su Zhiliag, and Chen Lifei's book *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves* examined Chinese women's testimonies of the treatment they endured and the stories of how they survived the Japanese soldiers.[28] This book shows what happened to these women and how they felt during their time as Comfort Women, bringing human experience to the study of the Comfort System.[29] She wrote the book because she wanted to bring the Comfort System to light and raise awareness on the subject.[30]

Each book contributes to this thesis as foundational work on sex crimes during the war. Each of these books discusses the importance of how rape had been used as a weapon of power and a way to control others. Sexual violence existed, and the harsh reality is that it was used to dominate different nations.

This thesis focuses on the stories of victims and survivors of rape and sexual violence throughout the European and Pacific Theaters of World War II. The goal is to demonstrate how, even on different sides of the world, in different regions with different circumstances, people, cultures, and religions, these humans suffered the same war crime: being sexually violated by other humans. The countries guilty of participating in these war crimes and how they were able to get away from prosecution depended on how the nation dealt with the situation at hand during the war and even after.

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[26] Iris Chang, *The Rape Of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust Of World War II* (Basic Books, 2009), 52.
[27] Ibid., x.
[28] Peipei Qiu, Su Zhiliang, and Chen Lifei, *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1.
[29] Ibid. Loc, 110.
[30] Ibid., Loc 110.

This thesis is divided into three chapters with the following countries: Japan, Germany, and The United States / The Soviet Union. Chapter One, “Japan During World War II,” explores how Japan created a sex trade industry using women from their own territory. What these women had to endure was true human cruelty. This chapter asks questions about how these women survived and found hope while enslaved in the Comfort System. It examines how some girls held onto hope and a reason to live until they were freed at the war's end and how some tried to escape the reality of the situation. Chapter One also addresses the non-existent postwar trials for sex crimes of the Japanese perpetrators and how the Japanese military and government refused to acknowledge these women as important or even human, degrading them and purposely trying to erase them from the narrative.

Chapter Two turns to Germany to consider why German soldiers sexually violated those whom they deemed a “lesser” race according to their Nazi ideology. It analyzes Nazi Germany and its racial ideology, considering how the concept of the Aryan race's purity played an important role in the sexual violence against those they believed to be of a “lesser” race. Even though there were laws and regulations preventing intercourse with certain people deemed “racial poison” by Nazi ideology, the German servicemen did not always abide by the rules set for them. Even before the war, cases of sexual assault were brought to the attention of the German courts by their own people, just to be ignored to prevent the flaw in their “perfect” system from being exposed. They had entire brothels created for the use and abuse of Jewish women and girls. Young girls and children were witnesses of rape or even victims of sexual abuse themselves. German servicemen also committed mistreatment towards homosexuality and sexually abused young boys.

Chapter Three turns to the Allied troops of the United States of America and the Soviet Union. This chapter questions just how these two countries were able to get away with sexual war crimes and explores why some soldiers were not held accountable for their crimes. The chapter analyzes the United States' outlook on sexual war crimes committed by American servicemen as they pushed into Europe after D-Day. It also examines the racial underpinnings of the American military and the treatment of African American servicemen as connected to the handling of sexual war crimes. The chapter then assesses the use of sexual violence by the Soviet Red Army as they pushed through Eastern Europe and through the siege of Berlin, which infamously led to the Rape of Berlin. The chapter will consider how the Soviet Union and Stalin "justified" such acts as "justice" and explore victims' experiences and perspectives. The chapter will show that the Red Army not only assaulted German women but also Jewish women leaving concentration camps and even their own Soviet women.

This thesis discusses a sensitive and often taboo topic that may traumatize some. This particular topic can be frustrating, upsetting, and triggering for some readers. Some facts and stories can be unsettling and difficult to take in. This thesis is not about spreading hate or attacking the nations being presented. It is about acknowledging that sexual violence existed and was a tool of war in World War II on all sides. It is important we acknowledge, analyze, and understand the complexities of war on civilian lives. Finally, by acknowledging the survivors, victims, and deceased by including their voices, they can be returned to the historical stage, remembered, and have their suffering seen.

Chapter 1

Japan

Warning: The content of this material contains explicit and graphic descriptions of torture, sexual violence with adults and minors, and suicide that could be disturbing to some readers.

World War II was a breeding ground for corruption and crimes against humanity. One type of war crime militaries on multiple sides committed was sexual violence against women. Both the Allies and Axis Powers took part in such crimes. Many countries not only used but justified rape amidst war. These acts of brutality took place from the beginning of the war. Women and men, old and young, and even children suffered because of these crimes. Some found themselves tortured and treated as mere animals. Objectification was common, especially in the eyes of both Japan and Germany, whose nationalism and ideologies of racial superiority viewed some people as mere objects and nothing more to justify their actions. Those humans were deemed lower and inferior to them because a person's race or ethnicity was not seen as part of the Axis powers' vision of a "utopia". This chapter will primarily focus on Imperial Japan and its past use of sexual violence and slavery. It looks at the Comfort Women and survivors of that horrific system at that time in history. The women who were forced into the Comfort Women System endured the brutalities of sexual assault and violence. Yet some were able to endure and survive this by focusing on the future even when camaraderie and unity among them were prevented by the military authorities.

In 1937, Japan invaded Shanghai, China, bringing bloodshed and sexual violence across the lands of the country in their attempt to take more territory.[31] One particular event took place in December of 1937.[32] It is known as the Rape of Nanking.[33] The pictures and evidence of such atrocities showed just how brutal the Japanese conquest of China was and brought negative

[31] George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 45.
[32] Ibid., 45
[33] Iris Chang, *The Rape Of Nanking : The Forgotten Holocaust Of World War II* (Basic Books, 2009), 144.

attention to the Imperial Japanese army.[34] When the Japanese army invaded Nanking, they killed people in inhuman ways and raped many people.[35] Japanese men used gang rape, objects inserted in women's private areas, and torture. Given the negative media attention (Fig. 1), Japan had to fix its international public relations problem immediately.[36]

THE NORTHERN STAR, SATURDAY, JANUARY 29, 1938. 7

JAP. ATROCITIES AT NANKING REVEALED

HOUSES LOOTED: GIRLS OUTRAGED

FRUITLESS PROTESTS

LONDON, Thursday.

A HORRIFYING story of executions, rape and looting by Japanese soldiers is contained in reports and letters from professors of the University of Nanking and American missionaries addressed to the Japanese Embassy, which now have been published by the "Daily Telegraph." It is the first authentic description of atrocities by the Japanese at Nanking and Hangchow.

The missionaries estimate that 20,000 Chinese were slaughtered and thousands of women, including young girls, outraged, while the Japanese authorities did nothing to curb the troops. Unspeakable crimes were committed in the full view of the Embassy staff.

Temple Entered

"Last night the soldiers came repeatedly to the University library, where crowds of refugees were sheltering, and demanded women, money and watches at bayonet point.

BOMB OUTRAGE IN SYDNEY

SOUTH CHINA ATTACK

Frequent Japanese attacks upon towns in South China have been launched from Bias Bay, which is shown in this map of Hong Kong.

BRITAIN STILL HAS FAITH IN LEAGUE

GENEVA, Thursday.

U.S.A. Removes Austn. Trade Restrictions

JAP. ESPIONAGE IN AUSTRALIA IS ALLEGED

SOVIET ARMS REACHING CHINA

Collaboration Urged

Economic Survey of World Situation

VAN ZEELAND'S REPORT DISCUSSES COLONIES

LONDON, Thursday.

A PACT of economic collaboration open to all States with the object of assisting participants to raise the standard of living of their nationals, is visualised in the report of the former Belgian Premier (M. Van Zeeland) on his economic survey of the world.

The report recommends that Britain, the United States, France, Germany and Italy should immediately consider whether an agreement could be reached on general principles which could be embodied in a larger pact.

INDUSTRIAL LEADERS EXPELLED

SYDNEY, Friday.

Fig. 1: "JAP. ATROCITIES AT NANKING REVEALED" *Northern Star (Lismore, NSW: 1876-1954)* 29 January 1938: 7. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article225544797)[37]

A report from the Australian newspaper *Northern Star* is illuminating on the coverage of Japan's war crimes. Its report identifies the inhumane treatment of the Chinese citizens under the Japanese soldiers, including the brutalization and rape of some unfortunate women. In the section "Temple Entered," the account mentions three soldiers who raped a thirteen-year-old.[38]

[34] Ibid., 144-145,
[35] Ibid., 49.
[36] Ibid., 147.
[37] "JAP. ATROCITIES AT NANKING REVEALED," *Northern Star (Lismore, NSW: 1876- 1954)*, 29 January 1938: 7.
[38] Ibid.

At the very beginning of the article, the writer talks about a woman who was raped twenty times during the horrific event Rape of Nanking.[39]

> A missionary saw bodies in every street while walking with the Japanese Consul-General many weeks after the city was occupied. On December 13, a boy died in hospital with seven bayonet wounds in his stomach. A women raped 20 times, after which soldiers, trying to behead her with a bayonet, inflicted a throat wound.[40]

Such reports indicated Japan's early use of sexual violence in its conquest of Asian territories.

As Japan expanded its reach, the military came up with the Comfort System to help "prevent" mass rape again.[41] The Comfort System Station was built in hopes of "easing sexual violence".[42] However, even before the Comfort System had a real name, an earlier version had existed since 1932. Against the knowledge of its citizens and even some government members, the Japanese Army used their own women, called Karayuki, and Korean mining women in brothels under the disguise of helping the military with mundane tasks such as laundry, cooking, or helping the medics.[43] This pretext was a lie; these women were targeted because they were poor, and the Japanese Army promised them money for their services.[44] Despite such promises, the military often paid them little, if at all, and what recompense they were given could never make up for the women's hardships and suffering. The women endured minimal food to live, hardly any rest, constant rapes, beatings, and torture. In one Comfort Women's statement, she explains how she just lay there because there wasn't anything she could do but just endure what was happening to her:

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 45.
[42] Peipei Qiu, Su Zhiliang, and Chen Lifei, *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 12; 72.
[43] George Hicks, " *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 46.
[44] Ibid., 46-47.

> I was deceived by an agent from the Korean Peninsula. I thought that comfort for the army meant comforting the troops by dancing and singing, and that it would be all right. And the agent told me the same thing. When we crossed the border into China, [he] ordered me to "Take customers." Without understanding what " taking customers" meant, I went to the customer's house. With no warning, they rape me. I became desperate. One after another, so many of them. And then the soldiers came one after another, and I had to [have intercourse with them.]. When it was busy. I just lie down on my back, eating rice balls with my legs spread apart, and the soldiers come and mount me and leave, mount me and leave. Finally, I am beyond pain. From the waist down I get a numb and lose all feeling. It's a struggle just getting up each day. When the feeling [in my lower body] returns little by little, my legs cramp up and my abdomen gets cramped as well. There's heavy, dull pain that last all day. I know if I rest for two or three days, it would get better. But customers come one after another, so I can't rest. When people talk about a living hell, this is exactly what they mean.[45]

Every Comfort Station's payment system was different, varying according to the region in which it was set up. Some families who thought their daughters were signed up in the military as helpers got paid a small down payment for their daughters but never received any more money.[46] Comfort Stations would sometimes charge the enslaved women for food, board, and medical care, which their "pay" would cover.[47]

Imperial Japan's attitude toward anyone outside of Japanese ethnicity was notably prejudicial.[48] Yuki Tanka's book *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes World War II* points out the system Japanese soldiers had regarding Emperor ideology, which had origins in the Meiji era.[49] Emperor ideology was the belief that absolute power of authority belonged solely to the Emperor. Other books have also referenced this ideology of how the Japanese perceived

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[45] Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II* (Columbia University Press, 2002), 147-148

[46] Yuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the Occupation*, (Routledge, 2002), 42-43.

[47] George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 14.

[48] Ibid., 184 & 218

[49] Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II (Transitions: Asia and Asian American), (*Westview Press, 1996), 79.

themselves during World War II. In understanding the brutality of their conquest and the violence used against the conquered, Japanese soldiers believed that, in the cases of them committing such crimes, the Emperor would take the blame for their actions after the war.[50] Their actions also displayed that the Japanese government and army did not think it would lose the war. Most crimes were covered up and not talked about in their home country.[51] The fact of the matter was the Japanese military found ways to justify war crimes. In the end, the government knew it was attempting to create loopholes for wrongdoings by their men in uniform.[52]

Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* identifies the system young Japanese boys grew up in, a social setting with a military system of perfection and abuse of young children being raised under a military academic structure. Children were not only beaten and tortured but also believed in the Emperor system and expressed their devotion to him.[53] This could probably been seen in how they were trained growing up. Both schoolteachers and military officers trained Japanese children from the age of elementary school to submit and behave through violence to respect to those who seemed to be superior to them.[54] When put into service, they received same brutal treatment by their generals, "I do not beat you because I hate you. I beat you because I care for you. Do you think I perform these acts with hands swollen and bloody in a state of madeness."[55]

Chang pulls documents of the military accounts and viewpoints of the events that resulted in the violent mass rape that took place. Chang's book illuminates how the soldiers mistreated

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[50] George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War*, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 42.
[51] Yuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation*, (Routledge, 2002), 19.
[52] Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II* (Columbia University Press, 2002), 55.
[53] Iris Chang, *The Rape Of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust Of World War II* (Basic Books, 2009), 31-32.
[54] Ibid., 31-32.
[55] Ibid.

people. She also explained the system of treatment the soldiers endured; Chang's book demonstrated how these men in the Japanese military had the mentality to turn off like a switch, meaning that the people in front of them were no longer humans, and the mindset to see a human as a mere object. Such training created the ability for soldiers to dissociate from their violent acts. As one soldier recalled, "'Perhaps when we were raping her, we looked at her as a woman,' Shiro Azuma, a former Japanese soldier that took part in the rapes in Nanking, wrote, 'but when we killed her, we just thought of her as something like a pig.'"[56]

Nor were women the only victims. A former Japanese sailor said that they also raped their own young men on the ships if there were no women during World War II:

> Recalling how on-board ships superior officers in the absence of women sought a substitute in young sailors, he described his disillusionment with our superiors to whom we entrusted with our very lives. The obvious threat of discipline from such homosexuality would help explain why the Navy appears to have been the pioneer in setting up comfort stations.[57]

This is one of few references to male-on-male rape within the Japanese military. George Hicks's *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* notes that when it comes to male-on-male rape in Imperial Japan, there is little to no discussion on the topic. Chang's work is one of the few that discusses it. She talked about how the Japanese sexually violated both men (military and civilian) and women. They had a different way of sexually abusing men. They would not commit the acts on the boys personally but force the boys to sexually assault blood relatives. These soldiers forced family members to engage in incest as the soldiers watched. Some Japanese soldiers took great satisfaction in making innocent civilians commit heinous acts of incest.[58]

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[56] Ibid., 50.
[57] George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 129.
[58] Iris Chang, *The Rape Of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust Of World War II*, (Basic Books, 2009) 95.

As these soldiers dominated their victims, they threatened to kill the victims after having them do such grotesque acts.[59] By dehumanizing the males and their families, it was as if they were no longer human and were merely pawns to play with. Given that this was the operating framework of the military, it is easy to see how the Japanese Imperial soldiers later went on to use the Comfort Women as their victims.

While such incidents may have been more isolated, war crimes of sexual slavery were much more widespread. Historians estimate that there would be around 200,000 or more female sex slaves during World War II; this number excludes European sexual violations.[60] Identifying a specific number is difficult, as many documents are highly classified and locked away or were destroyed at the end of the war. It is important not to focus on the estimated numbers but more on the crimes and sexual brutality that the victims suffered. No human suffers the same, and no story is the same. Numbers and estimates give a rough idea but not the overall picture of what the victims suffered. Nobody should compare suffering and abuse because, in the end, victims were tortured or killed, and no number could express what they endured.

Those women who survived this system had an unbelievable force of strength in them. During the time of enslavement, they endured mental and psychological torture; the Comfort Women and the kidnapped victims suffered horrifying violations. There are few translations of documents, testimonies, biographies, and books, a challenge that also occurs in the European theater. Most stories have been hidden away or not translated into English. After the war, the survivors of the Comfort System returned home and would not tell their families about their

[59] Ibid., 95.
[60] Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II* (Columbia University Press, 2002), 93.

sexual enslavement. Part of this lack of firsthand testimony is due to societal views of sexual assault and rape, meaning that it would bring shame to the family of the victims.

However, many victims of the Comfort Women System have, in later life, discussed how ashamed they felt, believing they were somehow at fault for having endured this torture. In the last twenty years, many survivors have come forward to tell their stories, which has enabled historians to understand better the overall experience of those forced into the Comfort Women System. Now that some stories have been translated, it has been easier to gather information, which is important to get these women's stories heard and their suffering recognized. The motivation of these women coming forward is to get this information into the broader consciousness so that what they went through was not forgotten and for people to hear what happened to them. As a former Chinese Comfort Woman, Lu Xiuzhen, commented,

> I am so embarrassed talking about these things. These things are hard to talk about, but my stepson and daughter-in-law have been very supportive and encouraged me to tell the truth and seek justice. I am very old now, and I cannot stomach the atrocities done to me anymore. I cannot walk, my head is dizzy all the time, and my memory is failing me. I hate the Japanese troops who destroyed my reputation and my life. Japanese troops invaded my country and committed the crime that caused my misery; whether they admit it or not, the facts cannot be altered. Some Japanese people do not admit the bad things Japanese troops did in the past, but other survivors and I are still alive, and we can provide evidence. We will fight to the end.[61]

Liu Xiuzhen and other Comfort women have been focal advocates for telling their stories and sharing what happened in the Comfort Station with others—bringing light to this war crime that the Japanese committed against so many nations in the Pacific theater of World War II. Korea, China, Singapore, Okinawa, Japan, the Philippines, and Taiwan were countries affected by Japanese occupation and sexual enslavement, where young girls were used and killed for pleasure.

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[61] Peipei Qiu, Su Zhiliang, and Chen Lifei. *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves*. (Oxford University Press, 2014), 100.

The treatment of these girls and women was brutal; Japan avoided punishment for such crimes because they signed the 1921 International Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children treaty on December 15th, 1925[62]. This agreement should have prevented them from doing such acts in unoccupied countries.[63] Among other things, the treaty stipulated that:

> Means of violence, threats, abuse of authority, or any method of compulsion produced, enticed, or led away a woman or girl over age for immoral purposes shall also be punished, notwithstanding the fact that various acts constituting the offense may have been committed in different countries.[64]

The key word in the statement above is "different countries." Taiwan and Korea were not considered part of the treaty because it did not apply to their own territories, as they were provinces of Japan's expanding empire in the early 20th century. Therefore, creating the Comfort Stations with the aim of providing sexual partners for Japanese servicemen in Korea and Taiwan did not technically violate the 1921 convention. Using their occupied territories through the war enabled the government to say that they were not prostituting or enslaving women and children from other countries.[65]

Once the war began, it was nearly impossible for any regulation or punishment as the Japanese military expanded the Comfort Women system into newly conquered regions. In Nanking, to cover the fact they had committed a mass rape when they captured the city in 1937, the army created Comfort Stations. The official reason for the creation of the Nanking brothels was to prevent rape, when in fact, they were still raping women just under the disguise of

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[62] United Nations Treaty Collection, Chapter VII: (3.), *"International Convention of the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children"*, June 15, 1922 [UNTC].
[63] Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II* (Columbia University Press 2002), 156.
[64] Ibid., 156.
[65] Ibid., 157.

brothels. The brothels were, supposedly, clean and "pure" places that had a suitable environment for the prostitutes to live in:

> The official comfort house opened in Nanking in 1938. To use the word comfort in regard to either women or the "houses" in which they lived is ludicrous, for it conjures up spa images of beautiful geisha girls strumming lutes, washing men, and giving them shiatsu massages. In reality, the conditions of these brothels were sordid beyond the imagination of most civilized people.[66]

The reality of the matter is that the environment these girls and women endured was by any measure a fundamental violation of basic human rights. Some were thrown into rooms or taken and used in small huts. The areas were dirty, and the women did not have clean clothing. Food supplies were short, and they barely had anything to eat, especially once the Japanese military started losing against the Allies. The weather differed depending on where they were relocated, and they rarely had appropriate clothing. Most girls called the brothels "camps" and the rooms "stalls."

These sites were never a safe environment for women. Those who spoke out were tortured and used as examples to make others compliant. In the book *Comfort Women*, Nora Okja Keller[67] talks about her mother Akiko's experiences and uses her journal. Her mother's journal detailed her life as a Comfort Women System survivor. In the journal, her mother talks about how she got her name "Akiko". A part of stripping away the identities of the women being forced into the Comfort System, Japanese soldiers would force a new name on the women, therefore severing all connections to their former lives. In her journal, she describes meeting a woman prisoner in the same Comfort camp near the Yuba River where they were both being held.[68] The soldiers called this woman "Akiko 40" even though her real Korean name was Inbuk. "Akiko

[66] Iris Chang, *The Rape Of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust Of World War II*. (Basic Books, 2009), 53.
[67] Nora Okja Keller, *Comfort Women,* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998).
[68] Ibid., 28.

40" purposely fought the soldiers and tried to humanize herself to the point the soldiers refused to touch her. She yelled about what country she was from, who she was, and what her real name was, and she talked about her family.[69]

> One night she talked loud and nonstop. In Korean and in Japanese, she denounced the soldiers, yelling at them to stop their invasion of her country and her body. Even as they mounted her, she shouted I am seventeen, I had a family just like you do, I am a daughter, I am a sister.[70]

She did this while they tried to force her to submit to them, with the result that the men would have a hard time assaulting her. The idea of objectifying "Akiko 40" as a mere object failed; the men left her stall upset, were unable to finish raping her, and were forced to move on to the next girl. Because "Akiko 40" made herself human, the Japanese punished her severely, using her as an example.

> All through the night she talked, reclaiming her Korean name, reciting her family genealogy, and even chanting the recipes her mother had passed on to her. Just before daybreak, they took her out of her stall and into the woods, where we couldn't hear her anymore. They brought her back skewered from her vagina to her mouth, like a pig ready for roasting. A lesson, they told the rest of us, warning us into silence.[71]

In this horrific death of "Akiko 40," Keller's mother found her inspiration to live and fight back. Keller's mother realized what this woman was able to do by making the Japanese soldiers not see her as an object but as a person. The author's mother, who also had been stripped of her given name by her captors, took up and adopted both of the deceased woman's names, Inbuk /Akiko, as an honor to the female who held it last. The soldiers, therefore, called her "Akiko 41" in the camp. However, just like her deceased figure of inspiration, Keller's mother, now calling herself

[69] Ibid., 28.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

"Akiko," also decided not to let the Japanese break her.[72] Keller's mother, even after the camps, kept both the Korean name Inbuk and the Japanese name Akiko for the rest of her life.

Identity is one of the very things that the Imperial Japanese Army tried to take away from the Comfort Women. This is prevalent in testimonies and biographies. The Comfort Women and their identities were separated as part of Japanese troops' efforts to have control over them. [73] The soldiers also used fear tactics such as torture, beating, and even death to have them submit. Other tactics used to coerce the women into sexual slavery were using families as leverage, lying about jobs, and transferring them to an entirely new country. Most of those in occupied land had to deal with the rules and restrictions of being under Japanese control and being taken to brothels, with orders that "Comfort Women are forbidden to go out and escape; any violator and all her family members will be decapitated".[74]

In a surviving Comfort Woman's statement, Lin Yajin goes over some punishments she experienced and ways the Japanese would bind them for trying to escape, breaking any set rules, and even when she tried to resist their assault on her body:

> We saw torture instruments and feet cuffs. The Japanese soldiers placed the cuffs on our feet so that we could not move. The cuffs would break your bones if you sat down, so we could only stand. An interpreter who looked to be a native of Hainan came in and said to us: "Do not try to run away. You will be killed if you try to escape."[75]

She also later stated just how badly she was brutally beaten just for refusing them, as well as an incident where they just came in and abused her for absolutely no reason:

> One time a Japanese soldier pressed me to the floor with a cigarette between his lips. He crushed the cigarette onto my face. The burn area immediately swelled up. The wound left a scar next to my nose. [the scar, which is about the size of a large pea, is clearly

[72] Ibid., 28.
[73] Peipei Qiu, Su Zhiliang, and Chen Lifei. *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves*. (Oxford University Press, 2014), 196.
[74] Ibid., 58.
[75] Ibid., 136

> visible on Lin's face.] No Japanese doctors ever gave us a medical exam or treatment. If a girl fell sick, they would be thrown into the cold water. As time passed I began to urinate blood and I had severe chest pains. The pain went from my chest to my left shoulder. Even today my chest often hurts, bringing back horrible memories. I was locked up in the Dalang stronghold for a long time. Mother told me later that it was about five months. I cried every day. I also heard the crying of the girl in the next room and the sounds of the Japanese soldiers violating her since the rooms were separated only by metal sheets. Every night we cried in our rooms, talking about our parents, our families and our fears that we might never see them again. I was already very sick. My injured chest bones hurt, my private parts festered, I urinated blood, and my whole body was swollen and ached like hell. I thought I was going to die soon.[76]

These experiences often led to a deep desperation to either live or end their lives to end the suffering. Comfort Women lived in extremely traumatizing environments, often alone. Most of the testimonies of Comfort Women are firsthand, never mentioning connection or friends or someone to turn to. The Comfort Women in almost all the testimonies of those who survived and were willing to share their stories all had a common theme: a reason to live, something they held onto. They found some hope, a way to ground themselves in a terrible environment. Most were alone and had to deal with the brutality that was beyond what any normal human could handle. In such circumstances, despair and heartbreak were understandably frequent. Forced abortions, stillborn babies, and the death of children were common experiences.[77] Many of these girls were children, in some cases twelve to fifteen years old. Compounding this youth, Koreans had a different age system than people internationally view ages, in which Koreans celebrated their baby's first birthday the day they are born and celebrated a second birthday on January 1st, making them technically two years older on paper than in their international age.[78] Among the Korean Comfort Women, the age provided is most likely their "Korean age" and not the

[76] Ibid., 137-138
[77] Chung, Seo-Woon, " *Testimonies of Former Comfort Women from Korea*", Korea Verband, 2013.
[78] Amanda Holpuch, " Some South Koreans Just Became Younger Overnight", *New York Times*, June 28, 2023.

international age that most countries recognize as someone's actual age, meaning some of the victims were even younger than their Korean ages indicated.

The account of Song Shindo, also known as "Kaneko," a name given to her by the Japanese military, illuminates the trauma of childbirth and motherhood in such a system. She was sixteen years old when she was tricked into the Comfort System to make money. She talks about despair, being in a never-ending cycle of torment, and being a "Japanese toy." Throughout parts of her testimonies, she talks about her scars and the desire for death, as well as a Comfort Woman's suicide. Shindo also goes over what being a mother in the Comfort System was like.[79]

> Some women beaten by the manager for contracting a disease or refusing the demands of the soldier, out of despair, went to the bathroom to commit suicide by drinking undiluted cresol solution. Others hung themselves. At Comfort Stations' it was the duty to use condoms. However, most of the soldiers didn't. Because of this, many Comfort Women got pregnant. The Pregnant were not allowed a rest period, and some were expelled from the brothel. I got pregnant. I was forced to keep having sex, and my first pregnancy resulted in a stillbirth at seven months. I gave birth alone in my room. It was a difficult labor, and when the baby's body came out, it was dark purple and already dead. I lived at the "World View for three years until I was expelled for getting pregnant. At a navy brothel in Hankou, I did chores like laundry and cleaning, and after my birth, I moved to Yuezhou. The baby born in Hankou was sent away to a stranger. I continued servicing soldiers in a Comfort Station in Yuezhou.[80]

As Shindo's account illuminates, there was no concern for women's prenatal health, and the Japanese dehumanization of Comfort Women extended even to pregnancy and childbirth.

Those who survived had to find something to hold onto to keep themselves sane and human. Some girls focused on their families, babies, and their homes, even if nothing was going to be there for them in the event they were freed. The emotional connection and belief that something or someone was waiting for them after the war kept them going and gave those who

[79] Shindo, Song, "*Testimonies of Former Comfort Women from Korea*", Korea Verband, 2013.
[80] Ibid.

survived a reason to live. Liu Mainhuan, a Comfort Woman victim, recalls her captivity and her motivation to survive:

> The torture made my private parts infected and my entire body swollen. The pain in my lower body was excruciating to the point that I could neither sit nor stand. Since I could not walk, when I needed to go to the latrine I had to crawl on the ground. What a living hell! The Japanese troops had local people send me a bowl of corn porridge twice a day. They also had local collaborators guard the door of the cave dwelling where I was detained so that I could not escape. But given my health at the time I wouldn't have been able to run away even if there was no guard. I wanted to die but that would have saddened my parents, so I told myself to endure.[81]

The stories from The Comfort Women are all unique, but a common motif is this connection of something in their lives beyond the rapes and violations they were presently enduring. Even those who did not survive also had something to hold onto. Focusing on the future rather than the present, remembering who they were and where they had come from provided these women a way to compartmentalize the trauma. The extreme conditions and environment took a toll on them. Some wanted to live but were not able to. The brutality of the Comfort Women System was intended to break and kill the women in it. So much of who survived and who died was, primarily, it seemed to be the luck of the draw.

Chung Seo-Woon was one of the women who survived the Comfort System. Thinking she was going to find a job and earn money, found herself forced into sex slavery and forced to become barren because of the Comfort System. She initially lived in Korea when she was forced to be a Comfort Woman. Like many who thought they had signed up for an industry textile job, she was taken to the Comfort Station instead. She was sent to Singapore and then to the camp in Jakarta. That is where she became a Comfort Woman and where the Japanese forcibly sterilized her alongside thousands of others.[82]

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[81] Peipei Qiu, Su Zhiliang, and Chen Lifei. *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves*. (Oxford University Press, 2014), Loc 176

[82] Chung Seo-Woon, *Testimonies of Former Comfort Women from Korea*, Korea Verband, 2013.

> In Jakarta, all of us about 3,000 girls were sterilized. This was done by the military doctor in the Japanese military. I don't know what he did with the machine put into my private part, but I bled a lot. Later, I found out it was sterilization. After the sterilization operation, those of us Korean girls were sent to various places in the Pacific.[83]

She also stated that she had about fifty men violating her in one single day and a hundred men during the weekends. Her name was also changed to "Kukuko" for the Japanese military, which was just another part of dehumanizing her. She talked about the cruelty but also the reason why she lived and forced herself to keep going in this hell landscape. She recalled that the most difficult thing to endure was the continuous rapes, constant degradation, and tournament. She protested, killing herself and stated: "I thought I should survive for my father since I was his only child".[84]

Another illuminating account is the diary of Maria Rose Henson, of Filipino nationality; her name is of Spanish origin, dating back to the 16th century when Spain colonized the Philippines. She went through a similar thought process as Chung Seo-Woon but with her own unique experiences. Henson was fifteen when she was forced into becoming a Comfort Woman. She was kidnapped and taken by force. The details and drawings in her diary give an outlook on how a young fifteen-year-old saw herself. She, too, questioned why she did not end her life while living as no more than an object of sexual aggression for the Japanese soldiers. Her focus and her motivation to survive was on her mother: "I sat on the bamboo bed remembering all they had done to me. How could I escape or kill myself? The only thing that keeps me from committing suicide was the thought of my mother."[85] Both of these girls tried to hold onto hope and family.

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[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Maria Rose Hendeson, *Comfort Women: A Filipina's Story of Prostitution and Slavery Under the Japanese Military* (Rowman &Littlefield, 2016), 45.

In some cases, it was not enough, and the women ended their lives to escape the world that they had been placed in. Suicide was one way for them to escape from the torture that they had gone through. Li Yong-Nyo, who was kept in a Comfort Station in Yagoon, Burma, reports that there were Comfort Women who committed suicide by drinking cheap liquor and taking opium. When one woman died, "her body was placed upon a pile of kindling and burned; the army gathered together Comfort Women and forced them to watch."[86] Many survivors reported seeing suicides. In Huang Youliang's interview about being a Chinese Comfort Woman, she mentioned how the Japanese soldiers brutally beat up a young girl until she bled to death from her genitals, while another girl committed suicide.[87]

In the harshest environments, people will do almost anything to survive, as in the particular case of Gang Duk-Gyung. She became a Comfort Woman when she was sixteen and never had a menstrual cycle. When the war's end approached, she did not realize she was pregnant. It was a woman named Pang who noticed her pregnancy. Duk-Gyung survived the Comfort Stations only to find out afterward that she was going to have a child out of that experience. Her response was an adverse reaction. She noted, "I tried to throw myself off the ship as we crossed the sea to Korea, but this woman sensed what was going on and followed me everywhere, making it impossible for me to take my own life."[88]

Some came back from the war traumatized and had nothing. Women reported having no one who could understand their experience or why they were unable to have children. They felt shame and a sense of being unworthy. Most testimonies talk about the pain and guilt they had to

[86] Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in Japanese Military During World War II*, trans. Suzanne O'Brien (Columbia University Press, 2000), 150.
[87] Peipei Qiu, Su Zhiliang, and Chen Lifei. *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves*. (Oxford University Press, 2014), 128.
[88] Gang Dok-Gyung, *Testimonies of Former Comfort Women from Korea*, Korea Verband, 2013.

handle as they moved on with their lives as if nothing happened. Many felt something was still lurking behind them. One survivor, Yin Yulin, ends her interview,

> My health has been declining in recent years. The lower back pain that bothered me for years has become worse, as has the trembling hands and legs. I am also suffering from acute psychological problems, such as intense fear and nightmares in which I relive past experience's. I am trembling right now as I recall the past horror. These unspeakable things are really hard to talk about, but I can longer keep silent. If I don't speak out, people will not know how evil those Japanese troops were".[89]

Yulin is one of many surviving Comfort Women to discuss the after-effects of being a victim of the sexual slave system that had taken place. Even those in the European theater who suffered sexual violence had both mental and physical damage because of what their aggressors had done to them. In both cases, German victims (as discussed in chapter two) and Comfort Women had the same after-effects coming home as former sex- slaves. Some at home saw these women as traitors and sympathizers to the enemies, even though they had been forced into sexual slavery.

When examining stories from Comfort Women, there is a perception of them suffering alone and by themselves. Many seemed to feel it was a moot point to connect with someone, and the idea of death or someone dying could be a reason why they were not willing to get close to others. Nobody knew what tomorrow would bring, and the heartbreak of losing more people was perhaps too much to bear. Their captors and tormentors ruled their lives. Jeomsun Ahn's biography recounts how little importance or humanity they were treated under Imperial Japan's regime. Even with others around them,

> the Japanese soldiers called me by a Japanese name, Yashita-san. Amongst ourselves there was no need to call each other by name either: if our ages were similar, we call each other friend and someone older we called her Unnie.[90] We had not much in the way of clothing, no underwear; we just given one piece dresses that could be easily removed and only had a couple of buttons on top of that opened and closed easily. At that comfort

[89] Peipei Qiu, Su Zhiliang, and Chen Lifei, *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 116.
[90] Unnie: Korean Honorific meaning older sister

> station, there were no civilians, and activities were carried out by Japanese soldiers: the preparation of food, the division, and disruption of clothing, everything.[91]

Ahn's story provides detailed examples of how the system worked, how she dealt with her fear, and how the women did not help each other. A reassuring system that could convey safety was never possible.

The women in Comfort Camps never stayed in one place long, and the Japanese soldiers made them switch places or even move camps, most likely to prevent the women from getting too close to each other. Ahn was given hardly any consolation,

> As I was crying the next morning, one Unnie came over to me and said that I have to do as people like that officer tell me. That's the only way to stay alive, she said. She had been there before I arrived, but still, I really didn't want to do that act.[92]

Ahn's story is one of the many dark stories out there. The pain she went through plays an important role in how she handled the situation and the people around her. She also talked about how some Unnie would give the young girls cigarettes or opium to help with the pain or drift from reality. Ahn believed she was only fifteen when she started taking drugs to help her cope with her surroundings. Drug usage was a common coping mechanism practiced by the Comfort Women.[93]

This idea of unity for these women did not seem to exist. These women were intentionally isolated by the Japanese military, both geographically and socially, a tactic used to prevent the women from forming an uprising. It is more of a sense of survival than a sense of unity from these women. There were no breaks or even time for them to rest in the camps and brothels. They were damaged beyond compare by the isolation they had to go through and the

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[91] Ahn Jeomsun "*Testimonies of Former Comfort Women from Korea*", Korea Verband, 2013
[92] Ibid.
[93] Peipei Qiu, Su Zhiliang, and Chen Lifei, *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 70.

traumatic events they experienced. Many compartmentalized their experiences or struggled to comprehend what had happened to them. Song Shindo's story shows how little time the girls and women had for themselves. She only knew to reference herself as a "sexual tool" to satisfy the soldier's sexual appetites and that the scars would never heal on her body. Most of all, her story about giving birth when she was only sixteen and then for her second birth, both times doing it alone.[94]

The word "alone" is often used in the testimonies of these women; during this event, they suffered the unimaginable.[95] The Japanese government did manage to break them and make them suffer by themselves. Their names were erased, often changed to Japanese names, their support networks were destroyed, and their personal identities obliterated. The women knew they were being treated as if they were mere animals and nothing more, but they lacked the power to change the situation. In Sonja M. Hedgepeth's *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women during the Holocaust*, her observations on the situation of the Jewish women and the brothels that kept them speaks to the experience of the Comfort Women as well. Hedgepeth notes that "the double bind of being dependent on others, yet at the same time being able to trust no-one, created a perfect climate for rape and sexual abuse to occur. Furthermore, its unfortunate legacy has continued long after World War II."[96] The Comfort women, just like the imprisoned Jewish women, had no control over where they lived, what food they got, or the treatment they received from their captors.

The Japanese military thought they had found ways to avoid violating the contract of the 1921 International Treaty and justify their actions. An example is how they used Dutch and

[94] Shindo Song, *Testimonies of Former Comfort Women from Korea*, Korea Verband, 2013.
[95] Gang, Dok-Gyung, "*Testimonies of Former Comfort Women from Korea*", Korea Verband, 2013.
[96] Sonja M. Hedgepeth, *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women during the Holocaust* (University Press of New England, 2010),128.

Australian nurses taken in the conquest of Southeast Asia. The Japanese, under false pretenses of working jobs like being a waitress, had the nurses sign an agreement to this effect, but in reality, they signed away all their rights.[97] This provided a smoke screen that hid the actual treatment of these women. Those who suffered from these experiences had the same problem of not wanting to go home due to the shame of what happened to them and not wanting people to know about the experiences that they went through.[98]

Each country viewed how to handle these hardships differently. There were also rare instances of Comfort Women who were from Europe who handled the situation differently than those kidnapped from different parts of Asia. Yuki Tanaka's *Hidden Horrors* mentions a European nurse captured by the Imperial Japanese military and the differences in how they treated those from Europe compared to women of Asian descent in the Comfort Stations. Japan did sign a law under the International Treaty Forbidding rape or human trafficking in 1925; It prevented any prostitution with women from other countries or sexual trafficking.

The difference in treatment between European victims versus Asian victims can be seen with the UNWCC's (The United Nations Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes) goals to investigate war crimes during both the Nuremberg and Tokyo Trials. The UN created this commission in 1944-48 to gather information on the horrendous war crimes nations committed during the war that the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials left unaddressed. One of those crimes against humanity is the European Comfort Women.[99] Japanese men were prosecuted for rape of these European women; these Japanese men were only tried for raping women of European descent,

[97] Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*, Transitions: Asia and Asian American series *(*Westview Press, 1996), 96.
[98] Ibid., 89-92
[99] Dan Plesh, *The Lost History of Prosecuting Axis War Crimes: Human Rights After Hitler*, (Georgetown University Press, 2017), 2.

never for the large sexual slave trade of Asian women. Only a few Dutch girls who lived in the Philippines and Indonesia during the war and some British/Australian nurses who were forced into the Comfort System were able to point out their attackers, in part because it was mainly Generals or higher-ups who were allowed to sleep with the European girls.[100] With the Dutch girls, many times, the Japanese hid them under the fact that they were in Indonesia and considered them to be Indonesian people to try to get away with having European girls part of the Comfort System because it was a territory owned by Japan.[101]

Like their Asian counterparts, those European women who were part of the Comfort System were not very vocal about what happened to them, making it hard to find specific sources or stories. Nonetheless, there is a rare memoir by Jan Ruff-O'Herne, who bravely wrote her story of being a Dutch Comfort Woman. She gives a Western viewpoint of what being a victim of the Comfort System was like. Much like other survivors, Jan Ruff-O'Herne found something to focus her mind on to distance herself from the trauma she endured. Her religion was the one thing she held on to during her dark, traumatic times of being sexually violated. She goes into detail about her first time. She first thought the Japanese men were going to kill her and the other girls who were taken but soon realized that was not the case at all,

> The Japanese officer was impatient now. He threw me on the bed and tore at my clothes, ripping them off. I lay there naked on the bed and he tore at my clothes ripping them off. I lay there naked on the bed he ran his sword slowly up and down, over my body. I could feel the steel touching my skin as he moved across my throat and breasts, over my stomach and legs. I was aware of the shame of my naked body. He played me like a cat does a helpless mouse. The game went on for a while and then he started to undress. I realized then he had no attention of killing me I would have been no good to him dead. He threw himself on top of me pinning me down under his heavy body. He was utterly repulsive. I could smell the sweat of his body and his putrid breath. With all my strength I

[100] Ibid., 5.
[101] Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in Japanese Military During World War II*, trans. Suzanne O'Brien (Columbia University Press, 2000), 175.

> tried to fight him, I scratched him, but he was too strong. The tears were streaming down my face as he brutally raped me. It seemed as he would never stop.[102]

Unfortunately, the stories of rape and violation from the Japanese soldiers to their victims, regardless of their nationality, does not much differ in the brutality.

In accounts of Comfort Women such as Jan Ruff-O'Herne and Chung Seo-Woon, it is easy to see how the Japanese military wanted these accounts to be silenced. Even during World War II, Japanese soldiers were censored from talking about the Comfort Stations. In soldiers' diaries that are available to the public, they do not tend to address the women that were violated. It is obvious these women existed in the world, and the experiences that they went through were real. Accounts and testimonies of these women exist. Soldiers violated and abused as well as murdered these women. However, in journals and diaries, the accounts of these women in the Comfort Stations either do not exist or have been censored. In one instance, a soldier named "Yamamoto censured his own poetry in the back of his diary notebook marking 'X' next to questionable lines as -they say the responsive of the imperial comfort service to buy women in Shanghai and then go home."[103]

Despite these efforts at self-censorship, there are reports on how soldiers reacted and acted toward the women.[104] These reports came from Tokyo National Instruction from American scholars who were allowed to look over Japanese soldiers' diaries and journals from the war.[105] Soldiers do not have in-depth personal accounts in most cases. Those accounts are often hard to come by for two reasons. First, most people did not want to admit they had been part of large-

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[102] Jan Ruff-O'Herne, *Fifty Years of Silence: The Extraordinary Memoir of a War Rape Survivor*, revised edition (Random House Australia, 2008), 93-94.
[103] Aaron William Moore, *Writing War: Soldiers Record the Japanese Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2013), 152.
[104] Aaron William Moore, "The Chimera of Privacy: Reading Self-Discipline in Japanese Diaries from the Second World War (1937-1945)," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68, no. 1,(2009): 20; 173.
[105] Ibid., 20.

scale human rights violations. Most men were not prosecuted for their crimes of rape. Admittance would have made them liable and provided proof they had committed heinous acts.[106] The second reason is that few accounts exist of how the Japanese military personnel viewed the women. Their accounts have been censored from their own diaries and journals to distinguish between personal and private.[107] The Comfort Women were under the impression that if they had talked about their experiences, the information would have been censored. Even with their personal ideas and thoughts, soldiers were trained from the beginning not to talk about incriminating classified information, which points out the fact the Japanese government and military knew the Comfort Stations were illegal sexual slavery that they aimed to get away from incriminations by having the soldiers bury their own experiences of what took place in the brothels.

When it comes to the relationship between Comfort Women and Japanese soldiers, it was beyond anything resembling a consenting relationship. Soldiers were trained to see these women as objects and animals rather than humans.[108] However, from statements of Comfort Women, some men formed connections with specific Comfort Women or had favorites they preferred seeing. The women had no choice, but the men had choices in who they preferred. Through testimonies and academic research, there are mentions of Japanese soldiers committing murder-suicide, where the soldier killed a Comfort Woman and then themselves so they would not die alone.[109] In some cases like this, it shows some attachment that these men had towards the women. Still, it is unclear how much some men viewed the Comfort Women beyond

[106] Ibid., 170.
[107] Ibid., 187.
[108] Iris Chang, *The Rape Of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust Of World War II* (Basic Books, 2009), 50.
[109] Yoshimi Yoshiaki*, Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in Japanese Military During World War II*, trans. Suzanne O'Brien (Columbia University Press, 2000), 151.

objectification. Some Japanese soldiers were sometimes called "favorite soldiers," representing ties and connections that soldiers would have with some girls. The favorite soldier for Comfort Women would have this give-and-take relationship. The soldier gave the girls gifts and information about the war, and in return, the soldier got a female-sensitive touch beyond the physical and the emotional, which they lacked from war.[110] Some of the Comfort Women behaved more affectionate to soldiers that favored them out of a need for survival and a sense of protection.[111]

The relationship of Comfort Women is complex, and most survivors could not forgive their attackers who left scars, both mentally and physically, that never healed. Nonetheless, some Comfort Women did not have horrible things to say about the Japanese soldiers because they had different experiences. George Hicks mentions the case of Madam X and her experiences with some soldiers. Madam X talked about how two Japanese soldiers befriended her and gave her food, chickens, and gifts to help her and were kind to her.[112] These experiences did not protect Madam X from the horrors of the Comfort Stations, however, the fact that she went by "Madam X" showed she preferred to remain anonymous, indicating a sense of shame about the past. She is still a victim of the Comfort System, born in China and taken during a raid:

> The armed soldiers moved quickly through the village, cutting off all hope of escape. Three soldiers with rifles came to our house while the rest fanned out through the village. They burst in and grabbed me. My parents tried to rescue me, but my father was kicked in the head. Blood went everywhere. I struggled as hard as I could but got kicked in the head, too. I still have the scar. See? Then my panties were ripped off one of the soldiers undid the front of his trousers. While the other held me down, he stuck his thing in me. I had no idea what he was trying to do. I knew nothing about the facts of life. I was only fifteen and hadn't even starts my first period.[113]

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[110] George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 79.
[111] Ibid., 79.
[112] Ibid., 80.
[113] Ibid., 12.

As Madam X's case illustrates, even those who found some aid from soldiers went through traumatic rights violations.

Hicks also presents a soldier's point of view of the situation concerning a young man and his first sexual experience. He said the touch of another human brought some humanity to him during the war; "I felt as if I were making human contact, if only for a short time. When I visited them, I felt as if able to recover human feelings."[114] For some men, the Comfort Station was a way to escape reality in seeking comfort even if it was with non-consenting women. Soldiers had to undergo harsh training and punishments to become Japanese military soldiers under constant strict, extreme conditions in an ongoing brutal environment.[115] For some men, Comfort Women stations were the places to fill the void and find the comfort they lacked.[116] Such a view stands in marked contrast with the experiences of the women who were assaulted, raped, and brutalized because of the Japanese Comfort Stations.

The Japanese military life focused on the war and, in its aftermath, forgetting the war. Finding an outlet by abusing their women captives, using them for entertainment, was a small escape from the reality that they were facing. The Comfort Women who survived still carry the memories on their psyche and souls. The implications of sexual torture and violence live past the war to even today with nightmares, damaged body parts, the inability to have children, and physical, psychological, and emotional scars that can never go away. These women held onto hope for survival to make it past the hell they lived. Those who died or were murdered still had hope in life and were taken away from the world, not because of their own will but because of the surroundings they were in. The Comfort Women lived through the most extreme conditions

[114] Ibid., 80.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid..

to return to an entirely new world than they originally knew. It is important to point out as well that women who did not survive also had hoped to live on some fought to the very bitter end. The Comfort Stations taught them they only had themselves because kindness and humanity were lost. Those who lived have painful memories of the events and experiences, but those who died cannot share their pain. The Comfort Women who were murdered and killed were raped until they died. Those people most likely had the same spirit to hold onto life. They were taken from this world by no fault of their own because of a circumstance that the Japanese forced them into.

Comfort Women were treated as if they were not people. Their name, "Comfort Women," is an unsubtle euphemistic attempt to disguise sexual slavery. It sounds nicer and sweeter to hide what really happened to these women. As of 2024, the Japanese government has yet to accept responsibility for what went on with the Comfort Women, despite the governments of other nations, most notably South Korea, pushing Japan to publicly take responsibility.[117] Still, the Japanese government and military refuse to acknowledge any wrongdoing.[118] If not translated into English or allowed out of the archives, most information is from the women themselves.

Many of those who survived are willing to tell their stories and what happened to them, but only in recent decades. It is a strength to let the world know what happened to them. Their stories also draw attention to the deceased victims who are unable to express themselves. The Comfort Women are not well-known to much of the general modern public. The fact that people are trying to push for those to see what happens in literature, photography, art, and film is a significant step forward. The Comfort Women's stories had been pushed by the survivors and

[117] Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*, Transitions: Asia and Asian American series, (Westview Press, 1996), 96.
[118] Amnesty International, " South Korea: Disappointing Japan Ruling Fails to Deliver to 'Comfort Women'," English Press Release, April 21, 2021.

family members for people to see and hear about. Now, they are being recognized, and their past horrors are being remembered and passed on. Japan should acknowledge that what happened to them was wrong and disclose their stories. Unlike before, when the Comfort Women were isolated, they pushed for unity and togetherness. They were suffering and on their own, surviving from day to day with no true sense of community, all done by Japan's military.

The Japanese military used the Comfort System for its own benefit, and the government has continued to refuse to apologize for human rights violations, the massive war crimes, and the injustice that the Comfort Women experienced. This event in World War II is often overlooked. People are pushing for their stories to be told so they can have their rightful recognition of what happened to the women in the Comfort System. These women lived and survived a terrible experience that words truly cannot express. The survivors and their stories show the strength of the women who were able to survive through the Comfort System, and in their stories, people can hear about those who had passed away and how they affected the survivors. The people who did not survive deserve just as much recognition as those who lived. Their stories and expressions may not be available to us, but in the stories of the living, the people who died shine as much as the storyteller. The effect of the people who were murdered and died from outside sources beyond their control plays the importance of telling their stories and the memory of them staying alive. The survivors who lived held onto life as much as those who died at the hands of the Japanese soldiers.

Japan has tried to erase and hide the wrongdoing of the Comfort Stations and the sexual slavery that happened. The Comfort Women System was meant to isolate and tear down the minds, souls, and bodies of enslaved women into nothing so they would not fight back. The Comfort Women held onto their will to fight, clung to life and the idea of going back to someone

or home to escape the reality they lived in away from the soldiers and the cruelty, and held onto anything that gave them the slightest bit of warmth and humanity so that they could feel human. These women pushed back against the dehumanization of the sex slave system with mental fortitude despite the brutal tactics of the Japanese military. The Japanese government and military wanted to hide the crimes they committed, while the survivors wanted the world to know what happened to them. The hope of living, seeing the next day, the will to fight brought them into the postwar decades and eventually inspired survivors to bring their stories to light.

Chapter 2

Germany

Warning: The content of this material contains explicate and graphic descriptions of torture and sexual violence with adults and minors, and suicide that could be disturbing to some readers.

When people think about World War II and war crimes, the Holocaust is the most prominent subject. They generally have some knowledge of Germany's infamous treatment of the Jewish people and their death camps. It brings up ghastly horror stories and images of the brutalization of humans. However, most people stop there. They acknowledge the fact that the Germans treated people as if they were insects, slowly being gassed, poisoned, and beaten until they died or starved until they were mere skin and bones. These images can be seen in pictures that the Nazis took to record what they regarded as their success.

The Holocaust was more than just labor and death camps. Certainly, the death camps and their assembly-line gas chambers were a fast way to exterminate those who the Nazis believed were inhuman. However, the disturbing idea of a gas chamber was not the only cruel and grotesque punishment. The Germans had control over a massive number of humans and pursued their extermination goals in a variety of ways for years with impunity. Moving beyond the most infamous camps like Auschwitz or Treblinka, historians have identified the war crimes that the Nazis committed outside the camps as well. General society has overlooked the human experimentations compared to other crimes committed, even though they have been recorded in documents. In general, there is more public awareness on the horrible sterilization experiments by the Hitler regime then the rapes and sexual assaults that occurred during the war. Indeed, despite their bureaucratic reputation, the Nazis did not record and document everything, especially if they broke the rules and regulations that Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, set up

for his soldiers, particularly when it came to sexual intercourse with women deemed to be from "inferior" groups.[119] Few feared the consequences, while others did not care.

The sexual violence of many German soldiers toward Jewish women in particular during the war was in direct opposition to Nazi racial beliefs. Hitler and the Nazis identified Jews, the Romani, Slavs, those with disabilities, and homosexuals as threats to the "pure" German race Hitler wanted to build. In pursuit of building this *Volksgemeinshaft* ("racial community"), the Nazis portrayed certain groups as "poison" and "untouchable," while others, like German children, were portrayed as the future. Yet there are cases of German soldiers sexually assaulting women in these categories. These actions of German soldiers demonstrate that despite the indoctrination of Nazi beliefs, their behavior was not always in line with those beliefs.

The Nazis sought to create a perfect "utopia" filled with the racial ideology of Hitler and his views on the way the world should work. This vision included the division of sexes and how "true" men should look, act, and be, while women existed for only one reason: to give birth and create children for the "future of the German Nation."[120] Nazi ideology saw things from a dichotomizing viewpoint. A person either fits in or is not part of the empire that Hitler set into motion.[121] Creating laws and restrictions for their future, the German people set out for a new world and a particular image of how that world should be in the Nazi civilization.[122]

Laws and regulations were the foundation of the regime that Hitler and Heinrich Himmler had set up for the soldiers. There were punishments for those who broke the rules, yet rules were still broken, and many were never caught. The German soldiers who were caught

[119] Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler,* (Oxford University Press, 2012) 486-487.
[120] Ibid., 462.
[121] Alana Fangrad, *Wartime Rape and Sexual Violence: An Examination of the Perpetrators, Motivation, and Function of Sexual Violence against Jewish Women During the Holocaust* (AuthorHouse, 2023), Loc 162.
[122] Ibid., Loc 340.

committing sexual crimes with those of non-Aryan descent were originally punished by death. While Himmler had established this law, some German soldiers committed such violations anyway with little regard for the law. In 1937, Himmler passed a no-drinking law prohibiting soldiers from drinking. By the end of the war, the rule was no longer enforced. Likewise, the enforcement on the prohibition of sexual violence disappeared. The more the war continued, and the less control Himmler had over his men, the more the laws went unenforced, even as the incidents continued.[123] The Nazi soldiers from the SS[124], SD[125], and Wehrmacht[126] found ways to push the limits. The soldiers used their position of power to abuse those beneath them. Rules applied but did not stop them from committing acts against their own laws and country, including laws like prohibiting sexual interaction with the "lesser races." Nazis ignored the laws and molested, violated, and sexually assaulted young girls, boys, women, and men.

The Nazi occupation of countries like Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland meant that their racial ideology and treatment of women extended to those occupied nations. Occupied lands all had to deal with Nazi rule, and with control came circumstances for Nazis to do as they pleased to the civilians who lived under the rule of Hitler and his extreme laws and regulations. Himmler and his rule over the SS troops was supposed to play a significant role in the treatment of the conquered people and set behaviors of the military as a whole. Hitler and Himmler did not believe in the mixing of the races. In their view, the Aryan race bloodline should be kept pure, and any sexual interactions with "lesser races," especially Jews, were prohibited and a crime. The standards for women and men played an important part in Nazi ideology and the way Himmler and Hitler wanted to re-create the world. German women of the Aryan Race were

[123] Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, (Oxford University Press, 2012), 227.
[124] SS- Elite German guards under the Hitler Regime called Schutzstaffel.
[125] SD- German central security team called Sicherheitsdienst.
[126] Wehrmacht- United armed forces of the German military.

viewed as the grand prize to keep the "pure bloodline" clean, for those who were not part of the "pure bloodline" were automatically a threat to the Nazi's new world ideology.[127]

As the Nazis invaded and occupied the majority of Europe, domination of the land and people were the main focus, but the Nazis did more than try to violently conquer.[128] They also raped women and assaulted them in the new territories they entered.[129] They would come in and violate the girls and women, and even after death, they would sexually violate their bodies. These violations included gang rape and constant brutalization. They used rape as a weapon, particularly against those deemed "racial poison" by Nazi propaganda, and they used it to their advantage.[130] The goal of the Nazis was to make those whom they deemed non-Aryan feel like nothing more than mere animals, and they took that notion to the highest degree possible, to strip away any ounce of humanity they had. Jewish and Romani women, homosexual men, children, and those with disabilities were all regarded as "unworthy of life" by the Nazi regime. They were thus vulnerable populations targeted by the German military. Most rapes were intended to humiliate the victim and to make them feel vulnerable and unable to feel like themselves. Some girls were gang-raped to death or sexually tortured while the townspeople watched the girls being violated in front of their eyes:

> German men occasionally cut off women's breast, which resulted in her very painful death. The technique of putting women up on a board, naked for everybody to see, did not only mean physical torture. In the moment women confronted her death, the predators took away her feminine identity. In addition, they terrorized the local population, who had to watch or overhear details about victims' humiliation and murder.[131]

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[127] Ingelore Herz Honigstein, "Survivor : Ingelore Herz Honigstein," told to ASL, trans. Patti Durr, November 2006, https://www.rit.edu/deafww2/sites/rit.edu.deafww2/files/documents/IngeloreNTIDSummary.pdf.
[128] Dagmar Herzog, *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 198-199.
[129] Ibid., 200.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.

Germans clearly viewed rape as a legitimate weapon of war. Such sexual violence in invaded countries was a war tactic intended to terrify conquered peoples. The Germans used force and sexual violation of the body as a weapon. The moment they invaded the land, they had an excuse to take a girl or woman, particularly of marginalized groups, and brutalize them. Making a point that the invaded country cannot do anything to help the women of their nation:[132]

> Near the town of Borissov in Belothe Soviet Union, 75 women and girls attempting to flee at the approach of German troops fell into their hands. The Germans first raped and savagely murdered 36 of their number. By order of a German named Hummer, the soldiers marched L.I. Melchukova, a 16-year-old girl, into the forest, where they raped her. A little later, some women who had also been dragged into the forest saw the boards near trees and the dying Melchukova nailed to the boards. The German had cut off her breasts in the presence of these women.[133]

Of course, if the SS troops were out of line, they would have been severely punished for breaking the rules. As the vanguard of Hitler's racial ideology, the SS represented the racial utopia Hitler sought to create and therefore, their assault and rape of Jewish women was viewed as a crime because it violated racial laws, not because they had violated a woman's body. Fear of consequences and adherence to the Reich's racial ideology should have kept the men in order, but there was tension between following orders and breaking rules among soldiers who were taught that the Aryan race was the most powerful race in the world.

For some, Himmler's rules kept them in order. They believed in the Rassenshande code established on September 15, 1935, that prohibited any Nazi from interbreeding or having any sexual intercourse with non-Aryan races.[134] However, for others, such prohibitions carried little weight. Sexual violence against non-Aryan women did happen under the watch of the Nazi party.

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[132] Ibid., 200.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Patricia Szobar, "Telling Sexual Stories in the Nazi Courts of Law: Race Defilement in Germany, 1933 to 1945," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 1/2 (2002): 131–63.

Such acts often went unnoticed or unpunished by the party. True believers in the laws set up for ethnic purity did not wish to believe something like this had transpired.

Even non-Aryans had difficulty believing German men or members of the military would sexually violate non-Aryan women. Zophia Shulman, a Holocaust survivor, refused to believe that such things had happened since the idea of an SS soldier touching a Jewish woman was so antithetical to Nazi propaganda.[135] The idea that Jewish women were at all sexualized by these men was beyond her realm of thinking. In her interview, she was distraught when someone asked her about it. Shulman talked about the laws of miscegenation that declared sexual relations with Jewish women were not possible.[136] When discussing the matter, she said, "Well, the Nazi officers wouldn't touch a Jewish woman out of – because they were ….They did it, but because there were Jews, was this law miscegenation".[137] For her, the laws permitting intercourse for German soldiers were set in stone according to Nazi leadership, so there was no reason to consider that people broke the rules. Such a perspective speaks to the belief among many in the Nazis' power. Indeed, Nazi leadership at the time believed that soldiers would find the idea of intercourse with "inferior" women disgusting.

Despite such perceptions, such violations did occur, as Shulman herself witnessed, somehow still disbelieving the reality of it. Shulman, later on in her oral memoir, finally talks about how even Nazi women would sexualize Jewish women.[138] Many different ranks of German soldiers took part in sexual crimes, Ursula Falk provides an example of this type of sexual violence. Her family moved to Germany, and she tells what it was like being a Jewish girl

[135] Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, (Oxford University Press, 2012), 309.
[136] RG-50.477.1453, Oral History interview With Zophia Shulman, Oral Interviews of The Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives Branch in July 2007.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.

in Nazi Germany. She talks about beatings by her teachers and being raped at home by the Nazi officers when she was only nine, and the German police not taking the claim seriously:

> I was absolutely terrified. Then one time, I walked out of my house. I must have been nine years old at that time. I came into the house, and there was a man that looked like a Nazi with a upside down swastika. And was on a bicycle. And he stuff a handkerchief in my mouth, and he raped me. I was a little girl. And the worst thing I remember, that handkerchief in my mouth. That was like…I couldn't breath, it was going down my throat. And then I came upstairs and I remember my mother soothing me in the tub for hours. I didn't know…..Good thing there wasn't AID's at that time, that's all I can say, But I remember distinctly my mother very innocently went to the police, and they laughed at us looking through pictures of criminals. And they thought it was very funny…. But that was the story.[139]

Her account reveals the way local authorities extended impunity for the perpetrators of sexual violence. Falk's testimonies broadcast one of the hypocrisies that can be seen in the Nazi army's idealism and how some Germans just didn't care about laws preventing them from having such intercourse with the "lesser Race." This is also shown when Falk went to the police expecting them to do something about the horrible act of rape that happened to her at nine years old. The police proceeded to laugh at an actionable crime that, technically, the soldier should have been punished for by breaking their own Rassenshande code, and yet nothing was done about it.

There are even cases of Hitler Youth members raping and torturing young Jewish girls in Germany. That was the case with a young Jewish twelve-year-old deaf girl, Ingelore Honigstein. She was on her way to school when a fourteen-year-old and a fifteen-year-old Hitler Youth member grabbed her off the street, dragged her to a room, and sexually violated her.[140] When she got back to school, a teacher helped her, but when she got home, she could not tell her parents

[139] RG-50.037.0017, interview with Ursula Falk, Oral history interview Holocaust Resource Center of Buffalo, The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Oral History Archives received the collection, Buffalo, NY, February 1995.
[140] Ingelore Herz Honigstein, "Survivor : Ingelore Herz Honigstein," told to ASL, trans. Patti Durr, November 2006, https://www.rit.edu/deafww2/sites/rit.edu.deafww2/files/documents/IngeloreNTIDSummary.pdf.

because of the shame and fear she felt.[141] Her family eventually escaped to America. After arriving in the U.S., Honigstein went to a doctor who told her she was pregnant at only twelve years old. She was scared and begged the doctor for an abortion. She wanted nothing to do with the pregnancy. She also feared how her father would react. The doctor told her he had to inform her father because she needed permission to get an abortion. The doctor told her father, and he permitted it.[142] She recalled that:

> I knew that it would all haunt me as this pregnancy, processed, but this had come to pass because of what the Nazis had done to me, that they had been cruel to me and, and I did not want their reminder, a baby living and constantly reminding me of what had happened. I would rather have taken poison and died. If this baby had lived, I would rather have poisoned myself if I could not obtain an abortion. I did not want to see this baby brought into this world and grow up. However, abortions were not legal without parental consent.[143]

This was a pregnant sexual assault victim, only twelve years old, who was ready to end her life because of what Nazi youth had done to her.

Ingelore Honigstein's story was not uncommon for women in the Jewish ghettos or the concentration camps. Honigstein was lucky to survive her encounter. She was a rare case. She was not only Jewish but was also deaf and unable to talk. She was the very thing that Hitler's regime feared as "poison" to the pure Germanic race, yet she lived. We cannot know why she was not killed, although it stands to reason that the young age of the Hitler Youth attackers may have prevented them from killing her, or they thought the fear would keep her silent. Some literature and testimonies reference this was not always the case for most female victims of Nazi sexual violence. Indeed, instead of disincentivizing or proscribing sexual violence, prohibitions like the Rassenchande code increasingly resulted in murder, under the perception that if there

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[141] Ibid.
[142] Ingelore Herz Honigstein, "Survivor : Ingelore Herz Honigstein," told to ASL, trans. Patti Durr, November 2006, https://www.rit.edu/deafww2/sites/rit.edu.deafww2/files/documents/IngeloreNTIDSummary.pdf.
[143] Ibid.

was no victim alive to report the sexual assaults, then the soldiers or Hitler Youth members would not face punishment for breaking the Rassenchande code.[144]

Nazi laws did not prevent sexual violence against non-Aryan women. Sometimes, even the "pure" blood German women and children fell victim to assaults. Sexual violence was a tool the various branches of the German military used. By 1939, Hitler's power over Germany was complete, as was the shift of the German government toward Nazified laws. Early on, before World War II, sexual crimes committed by soldiers against their own Aryan German women and children went unpunished and ignored. Nazi party members and judges let such occurrences go, as is evident in the case of a thirteen-year-old German girl named Ingeborg (who in later reference will be known as "I"), who was raped by her own fourteen-year-old brother, who was a Hiler Youth member, and his friends.[145] The judge blamed no one; the parents were absent because the father had joined the army, and the mother was not home because she was working to earn money. The kids were neglected, and the young girl was under her brother's watch.[146] Another case involved a stepfather raping his fifteen-year-old stepdaughter, Annie N. The judge released him because, as a Wehrmacht soldier, it would reflect poorly on the army if he was arrested. They let him go to save his image; "it was not about helping the victims of sexual abuse but, rather, about protecting their peers from being drawn into the same degenerative spiral. Nazi policy worked within an existing set of ideas."[147] Such impunity reigned when soldiers committed sexual violence against Germans; it would only worsen against those they deemed less worthy than their Aryan race.

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[144] Nicholas Stargardt, *The German War: A Nation Under Arms, 1939-1945 Citizens and Soldiers* (Basic Books, New York, 2017), 63.
[145] Ibid., 62.Nicholas Stargardt, *The German War: A Nation Under Arms, 1939-1945 Citizens and Soldiers*, (Basic Books, New York, 2017), 62.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid., 63.

Franziska Karpiński and Elysia Ruvinsky's research illuminates the sexual violence that the SS and Wehrmacht soldiers perpetrated against women not considered Aryan and how they fueled their sexual desires. In the case of survivor Sala Pawlow, a fifteen-year-old Polish girl in 1939, German soldiers brutally sexually assaulted her and humiliated her by attacking her with objects. Two or three SS soldiers dragged her into an alleyway, told her how lucky she was to be with them, and blamed her for the fact they were attracted to her.

> After having finished her day's work she got held up by the Germans. She was forced to undress, whereupon one of the Germans remarked: 'You are nothing special, but I like you'. When she was nude, he forcefully turned her around to show off her body to his comrades. He then touched her inappropriately and abused her with a riding crop, commenting; ' you do not know how to obey …I will show you. But I can not have you, you are scum, because you are Jewish and you are dirty what a shame! [..] this is what you will get instead of me because you are a dirty Jewess' he then beats her unconscious with the crop.[148]

None of them were punished, and Pawlow bore the physical and psychological scars of being sexually violated with a baton and other tools.[149] The fact they would not have intercourse with her worsened the situation. The abuse she received was punishment for their sexual attraction to her and a way to fuel the soldier's desire because they were unable to stimulate themselves, so they used objects in place of themselves.

Such actions are similar to tactics used by Japanese soldiers with the Comfort Women. In some cases where the Japanese soldiers used a gun in a woman's private area to bring fear and cause them to become submissive, it is reasonable to suggest that the German soldiers could have done the same with their own victims of sexual violence. The fact both countries used objects to penetrate their victims was a brutal way of torture; in the Japanese case, it was a statement of

[148] Franziska Karpiński, and Elysia Ruvinsky. "Sexual Violence in the Nazi Genocide: Gender, Law, and Ideology," in *Genocide: New Perspectives on Its Causes, Courses and Consequences*, ed. Ugur Üngör (Amsterdam University Press, 2016).
[149] Ibid.

domination. They did not have laws to prevent them from raping those they deemed a "lesser race"; unlike the Germans, they had such a high penal code and standards they needed to uphold. SS and Wehrmacht soldiers using objects was not only about power but also about desire they could not fulfill without breaking their laws.

Two years after Japan's Rape of Nanking, Germany invaded Poland in 1939. Both Japan's and Germany's invasions share similarities in the place of sexual violence in wartime. The force of brutality both countries exhibited through their hyper-nationalist ideology and the view that racial difference was paramount is evident in both their invasions and occupations. When Japan invaded Nanking, the soldiers were trained to kill and pillage and were under command to take over the area at any cost. It was a test for the soldiers.[150] Those who refused were left to be killed or be the killer; others got lost in the madness. While these soldiers were killed in the most torturous ways possible, the victims went through both mental and physical pain. The scene was so scary that the German Embassy[151] in China ended up being the ones stopping and helping the Chinese people, creating a safety zone with two hundred and fifty thousand Chinese refugees.[152]

Two years later, however, it was the Germans who tore through homes, grabbed the Jewish people, and tortured them.[153] They raped the girls and women in front of their family members. Fathers saw their daughters violated and murdered.[154] Fathers were killed in front of young girls, and women were raped and killed.[155] This is similar to what the Japanese soldiers

[150] Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, (Basic Books, 1997), 85.
[151] Ibid., 110
[152] Ibid., 112
[153] Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women During the Holocaust* (University Press of New England, 2010), 110.
[154] Ibid., 110.
[155] Ibid.

did to the citizens of Nanking. German soldiers killed the family members after the deed was done. Their last moments were those of helplessness.

Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel's book *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women During the Holocaust* illustrates the depth of sexual violence against the Jewish people after the fall of Poland and the creation of the ghettos. Warsaw doctors told of Jewish women and young girls taken and raped by the German soldiers who held them hostage in rooms. Those who lived could be considered lucky if they lived, though forever plagued with the memories.[156]

Accounts of German soldiers who would rape or commit sexual violence toward Jewish women are difficult to track due to a lack of oral and written testimonies about rape. Nonetheless, the Holocaust was not just death camps and starvation. Sexual assault has never been a primary subject of study for the Holocaust, but it was used as a devastating tool of war and power. The relative historical silence on this aspect of the Holocaust could be a result of societal views and taboos in discussing sexual assault or historians engaging with a topic that makes many uncomfortable.

The difference between Jewish victims and the Comfort Women is that the Comfort Women have only relatively recently become more public with their stories. The younger generation wants their families and elderly women to be vocal about what they went through and the effects it had on them.[157] By contrast, Jewish and Romani women have retained a reticence about the subject. The Jewish women who speak about their experiences do not go into detail about themselves, but rather about sexual crimes they witnessed against others; most were young girls or children when they witnessed such crimes. In the case of Ilse Diament, she saw such

[156] Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women During the Holocaust* (University Press of New England, 2010), 110.
[157] Peip Qiu, Su Zhiliang, and Chen Lifei, *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves*, (Oxford University Press, 2014), 116.

abuse and cruelty. In her words, the girls who were raped were pretty, but she was not considered pretty, so she was never assaulted by the guards.[158]

> Yeah, I was in seven camps, and not that easy camps. And always being dead. And in Majdanek, there were girls; the men were separate, and the girls were separate. And the girls next to me, they were beautiful girls, and the German soldiers came and raped so many girls, and after that, they shot them, and they died. And I was lucky 'cause they didn't touch me because I was not pretty, I was more childlike than the other ones. So, all miracles. I don't know if it's a miracle or if somebody else watched over me.[159]

Similarly, Dora Goldstein Roth witnessed a German soldier rape a young woman in a line.[160] They all had to undress and stand in a line naked and vulnerable. The soldier then grabbed a woman, brutalized and raped her in front of all the other women and girls. Roth later recounted that she could not fully comprehend what had happened because she was only seven years old when she witnessed the rape. Even as an adult, she admitted it stayed in the back of her mind.[161]

The effects on the children who were in the Holocaust and victims of the crime were much different than those as adults. Hedgepeth and Saidel analyze the experiences of the children who were sexualized in the camps, including young pretty boys – who were called "Dolly Boys" – as well as men. Hedgepeth and Saidel found that the younger the boys were, the more likely it was for the Nazi and German soldiers to abuse them sexually.[162] Unlike the Germans or, as we will see, Soviet and American soldiers, there is little evidence that Japanese soldiers or sailors had intercourse with young men only. Historian George Hicks pointed out that before the Comfort System was created, the Navy would allow intercourse between sailors and

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[158] RG-50.005.0009, interview with IIse Diament, Oral History the University of California, The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Oral History branch, Los Angeles, Cal, December 4, 1983.
[159]RG-50.005.0009, interview with IIse Diament, Oral History the University of California, The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Oral History branch, Los Angeles, Cal, December 4, 1983.
[160] RG-50.030.0197, Oral History with Dora Goldstein Roth, Oral Interviews of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Oral History Branch, June 8. 1989.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, (University Press of New England, 2010) 206.

young Japanese boys. This is the only reference to young men as victims of the Japanese military.[163]

There is evidence that in Germany, there were homosexual assaults on both men and women. In 1935, Hitler amended Paragraph 175 of the German legal code to create harsher punishments and broader arrest parameters to target the homosexuals. Men who were known and often arrested for being homosexuals under Paragraph 175 of the German legal code:

> Unnatural sexual act (Widernäturliche Unzucht) committed between a person of the male sex, or by a human with an animal, is punishable with imprisonment; or loss of civil rights may also be sentenced.[164]

Since homosexual relations were not permitted in Nazi society, homosexual men suffered both physical and mental abuse from the officers whether they were imprisoned or in a concentration camp. Officers took advantage of the men's sexuality and raped them in the back rooms. Like the female victims, these men and boys were often killed to keep the crime silent; those who lived often stayed silent about the treatment primarily due to homophobia, which meant few were interested in punishment for these crimes in the postwar years.[165] Richard Plant notes that "this was true so long as the older partner was able to dispense favors without getting caught and the Dolly Boys did not gossip and stayed out of trouble, none participation in location sex activities had been arrested as violators of paragraph 175."[166]

Perhaps the most systemic example of sexual violence in Germany was a system not dissimilar to that of Japan: sexual slavery. Under German occupation, Jewish women in occupied territory were often subjected to sexual slavery. Jewish women either "volunteered" or were

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[163] George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 129.
[164] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "What was Paragraph 175," Holocaust Encyclopedia, Paragraph 175 | Holocaust Encyclopedia (ushmm.org). Accessed on [June 23, 2024].
[165] Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, (University Press of New England, 2010), 206.
[166] Richard Plant, *The Nazi War Against Homosexuals: The Pink Triangle*, (Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 171.

forced to be part of the brothels.[167] Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*[168] goes over this concept:

> A quid pro-quo-rape in exchange for life, or rape in exchange for good faith guarantee against hurtful or disfiguring physical damage- dominates the female mentality in rape. In situations involving dangerous weapons or groups of men, most women believe they are confronting the realistic possibility of death, or at least the probability of serious physical injury. They either gamble on the "fair exchange" of rape or they are terrorized into immobility, from shock or from disbelief in their own capacity to successfully resist.[169]

By "volunteering," they were promised food and not to die of starvation in the work camps. Germany had two different types of brothels: one for the soldiers built in the occupied land and one for the work camps. Himmler set them up as a way to increase morale for his soldiers and to boost Jewish men's motivation to work.[170] The soldiers' brothels were set up so the men could have pleasure with "acceptable," non-Jewish women. Nonetheless, soldiers evaded such rules and regulations. SS member Franz Ziereis admitted that they took part in the Jewish brothels even though it was not allowed.[171] He talked about the torture and horrific acts he did and admitted that they, too, went into the Jewish brothels briefly and had sex with the women even though it was against the rules.[172]

The camp brothels were set up entirely differently from the ones set up for the German brothels in occupied lands.[173] Jewish women forced into sex work were there to "serve" the Jewish male laborers and were not intended to have sex with non-Jewish men. The Nazi administrators' goal was the use these women as a reward for Jewish men if their labor was

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[167] Dagmar Herzog, *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 173.
[168] Susan Brownmiller, *Against our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (Ballantine Books,1993), 458.
[169] Ibid., 458
[170] Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 486.
[171] 1994.A.0065, Permanent Collection, *Confessions of Franz Zieries, Last Commandment of Mauthausen*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC, 1993.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.

deemed worthy. The Jewish brothels were heavily regulated. They were set up with rooms where there was a hole for them to be watched by the officer in charge, and they were only allowed one position.[174] The rooms were not set up for pleasure, and the women did not get a choice in who they had intercourse with to prevent them from gaining connections with the Jewish men. Some women had "volunteered" to join the brothels, a decision usually made from their few options for survival. In contrast, others were forced into sexual slavery without even the illusion of choice. The Germans also switched the girls out to different brothels throughout the camps.[175] The brothel visits for the Jewish men were not for pleasure but for morale only, to foster better work production, and they were not given an option of not attending.[176] The Nazi administration used these sexual encounters as another method of control over the enslaved Jewish population.

The Nazis had peepholes in the brothels so the guards could monitor the intercourse taking place between the prisoners.[177] They would watch to make sure they were in there as a missionary-only style.[178] The guard's job was to watch, so it was not intimate or pleasurable, since the only reason prisoners were allowed in there was to use the girls as a release mechanism. If the guards did not think they were doing things the way they wanted, they would intervene, and the prisoner would be punished. Thus, not only did the Germans force women to have sex, but they also forced the men. Both were victims of rape; both were forced to follow directions from the guard watching them. For the Jewish men, it was either perform sex or get beaten.[179]

Unlike the brothels in the concentration camps, the brothels in German-occupied Europe were set up only for the German soldiers. Germans instituted codes and regulations to keep

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[174] Dagmar Herzog*, Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 173.
[175] Ibid., 178.
[176] Ibid., 177.
[177] Ibid., 178.
[178] Ibid., 177.
[179] Ibid., 178.

soldiers healthy. Only approved women were allowed to service the soldiers sexually. Most were French, Danish, and non-Jewish Polish prostitutes.[180] In the beginning, brothels were not permitted, but later, fearing that men would start looking at each other for sexual comfort like they did in World War I,[181] Himmler made it a point to demonstrate how wrong homosexuality was. As a result, he created these brothels.

Young male children were affected by sexual violence as well. These young boys were called *Pielpel*, translated as "Dolly Boys." The German soldiers tried to make the raping and sexual assault on these young boys look "mutual" and "transactional." They were paid with more food and excused from the hardships of the extreme work environment.[182] Most of these boys, once they came of age, got to visit the brothels to figure out what their sexuality was, because all their lives, they were only used to men touching them and having to do sexual "favors" for SS soldiers taking advantage of them.[183] These young boys and men were groomed for the sexual pleasure of male soldiers until they were considered of age and a man, no longer a boy, a clear attempt to avoid directly violating Paragraph 175. Even some generals who participated in the sexual assaults would use the argument that the boy was young and had not grown to be a man; therefore, it was not a homosexual act.[184] Such definitions illuminate how different societies constructed definitions of homosexuality in different terms as well as the wide-sweeping use of sexual violence by the German military. At the same time, the presence of "Dolly Boys" provides another example of how the German soldiers disobeyed the laws and codes set before them about "non-pure" sexual interactions.

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[180] Ibid., 205-206.
[181] Christa Hammerele*, Oswald Uberegger, and Birgitta Bader Zaar, Gender and the First World War* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 60.
[182] Richard Plant, *The Nazi War Against Homosexuals: The Pink Triangle* (Henry Holt Company, 1986), 163.
[183] Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women During the Holocaust* (University Press of New England, 2010), 86,
[184] Richard Plant, *The Nazi War Against Homosexuals: The Pink Triangle*, (Henry Holt Company, 1986), 167.

It is worth noting that one of the many reasons these young boys were picked was their appearance; this is where the name originated from. The boys' lack of masculinity made them look more feminine and attractive, as well as easy prey to their abusers. The boys were paid food and released from labor duties; a similar offer made to women from the Ravensbrück concentration camp had been given when they were forced into the brothels.[185] Testimonies from former "Dolly Boys" are very hard to find; those who were victims of this sexual abuse understandably do not like talking about it. In this period and well into the postwar years, it was illegal to be openly homosexual in much of Europe. But regardless of their sexual orientation, the male victims would have likely struggled to talk about being sexually abused by another man due to the cultural and social milieu and taboos of the time. General society would not have been interested in this crime, no matter how wrong, due to the homophobia.[186]

Despite the difficulty in tracing such activities in the written record, we nonetheless get glimpses of such practices through eyewitness accounts. In a Holocaust survivor's own testimony, Elsa Breuer witnessed a German soldier rape a young boy:

> Now in it is 1998, nobody ever writes about this block full of young boys and nobody ever told you in books, that I could, you know I don't want to have names. All. And the writers, and survivors, nobody ever tells you that the German officers use young boys. Nobody. Now it is 1998, today it is still taboo to talk about it? I am absolutely horrified..[187]

This is as much detail as Breuer provides, attesting to the endurance of the taboo. Her hesitance to elaborate reinforces the fact Nazis' abuse of children was horrifying. A different survivor named Gelbert Metz also reflects on these events and the silences around them:

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[185] Dagmar Herzog, *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 187.
[186] Richard Plant, *The Nazi War Against Homosexuals: The Pink Triangle* (Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 145.
[187] Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women During the Holocaust* (University Press of New England, 2010), 87.

> I don't think there have been many stories or books or research done on the amount of homosexuality and abuse of children at Auschwitz or other camps. At least I have not seen any, and there needs to be a big study made, because it's a big hidden secret, people don't admit to it.[188]

The Nazis, and much of German society generally, condemned male-on-male rape and pedophilia, and if a soldier were caught perpetrating it, it could mean death. SS guards or Kapos, high-rank prisoners, knew the ramifications of getting caught, but it did not prevent such sexual violence; they had the power to do so.[189] Hedgepeth Saidel mentions that even if it was male-on-male sexual violence, it could be seen as a conquering move, a sense of masculine authority to rape another man.[190]

Hedgepeth Saidel's observation describes the Nazi ideology perfectly. Divided by sexes and looks, a young boy or man looking like a woman put them at risk of grooming and assault by SS and Wehrmacht soldiers. Men were the ones with masculinity and authority figures in the relationship, and those boys they abused and had sex with they viewed as very feminine, grooming them to be their personal sex objects.[191] This area of study is complicated on many levels. This practice would not be something often recorded; if it was, it was socially anathema and considered inappropriate for the Nazi regime to be associated with.

Yet it did occur. Though records of testimony are rarer, there are glimpses of testimony like that of a male who had just turned eighteen. He never had experienced sexual intercourse with women because he was forced only to have sex with men.[192] He just wanted to go into a brothel and experience what it was like to be with a female because he never was able to have

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[188] Ibid., 87-88.
[189] Ibid., 86 .
[190] Ibid., 88.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Dagmar Herzog, *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century (*Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 185.

intercourse with the opposite sex. He was trying to find his sexual identity.[193] Some boys who were not Dolly Boys also went into those brothels, though most reported they just talked to the women. They just wanted a moment to feel human again.[194] The idea of forcing a girl was not appealing, and the women welcomed the nonsexual nature of these interactions.[195]

Assaults on the same sex were not just acted out by male soldiers. Female German soldiers were just as guilty. Jewish women, unfortunately, were not even safe from female Nazis. In some cases, Nazi women were cruel to the women they considered "pretty" or "attractive" because they were viewed as a threat to the German women's purity, despite being cast as "racial poison" by Nazi leadership.[196] A notable example is the case of Irma Grese, who was known for her sexual violence and for pushing the limits of women prisoners, torturing them just to listen to their screams. She enjoyed the pain she caused to the prisoners and was not punished – and even occasionally rewarded – for her treatment of those under her watch. This treatment included unusual forms of sexual violence and pleasure. Grese went around the camp and found women that she thought were beautiful. Using her whip, she slashed a girl's breast open and waited for the girl's chest to get infected, forcing the girl to be operated on with no anesthetic.[197] She started doing this after experiencing sexual gratification from watching a Nazi doctor named Dr. Gisella Perl operate on a woman who was awake during a surgery where she had to cut off a women's infected nipples. She watched how Grese was elated and sexually charged by the woman's

[193] Ibid., 185.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Patricia Szobar, "Telling Sexual Stories in the Nazi Courts of Law: Race Defilement in Germany, 1933 to 1945," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 1/2, 2002: 131–63.
[197] Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, (University Press of New England, 2010), 186.

screams of pain and misery. In Dr. Perl's statement, she stated just how monstrous Irma Grese's sexual desire toward these Jewish women was.[198]

> Grese went around in camp, her bejeweled whip poised, picked out the most beautiful young women and slashed their breast open with braided wire end of her whip. Subsequently, those breasts got infected by lice and dirt which invaded every nook and corner of the camp. They had to be cut open if the patient was to be saved. Irma Grese {sic} invariably arrived to watch the operation, kicking the victim if her screams interfered with her pleasure and giving herself completely to the orgiastic spasm that shook her entire body and made saliva run down from the corner of her mouth.[199]

There are not many survivors' stories from Irma Grese's treatment, and those who went under operation never talked, even if they did survive. It is hard to get a first-person point of view of what it felt like to be her victim. These victims were looked at only as objects to stimulate a sexual desire for a woman who sadistically enjoyed the blood and pain of her victims.

The victims of sexual abuse in World War II all had different experiences. What set Nazi-occupied territory apart from the Comfort System camps in Japan was that the concentration camps had unity and community among many of the prisoners. In the Pacific Theater, the Japanese worked on separating the women so they felt like they had absolutely nothing. By contrast, Jewish people had each other, which did not make their circumstances any better than the Comfort Women but did provide a greater semblance of community than in Japanese Comfort System camps. In some cases, Jewish women or men might have felt isolated as well, but most people who talked about their experience did say they felt more like a community when they were in the camps. Where many survivors of the Comfort Women System noted relying on the hope of the future and family outside the brothels, some Jewish survivors of rape and assault drew on the sense of community and togetherness, the knowledge that many of the women around them had endured similar trauma. Roza, a prisoner who was sent from Auschwitz to a

[198] Ibid., 186.
[199] Ibid., 186-187.

work camp in Germany, took it upon herself to create social activities for the women and even a theater group to keep the women's spirits up; it is easily presumed that Roza was empathic to her fellow prisoners, as she stated she held no judgment towards women who had confided in her.[200] The German camps had their own networks; those who were sexually assaulted most likely kept it to themselves because of either fear or threats. Even other Jewish people refused to believe that the Germans would touch Jewish women because of the laws in place. The accounts of children being assaulted and raped were hard to believe, to the point that even researchers questioned some girls' stories because they did not ever stay the same or line up with each other.[201]

If we look back at the case of (I)[202], her own brother participated in her gang rape at the hands of her own flesh and blood and with boys she knew. Nothing was done for the girl, and the case was dismissed because the boy was part of the Hitler Youth in addition to their family serving in Hitler's regime.[203] The state dropped and did not publicize this case to make everything seem wonderful in Hitler's Third Reich. In looking at Ingelore Honigstein's case[204], she was dragged off the street and raped by Hitler Youth as well. No consequences came to those boys, nor was there any justice for her. Life just had to continue for them. If members of the Hitler Youth could get away with this, then those who were older would most likely not be punished either. It did not help the other crimes of the German soldiers that centered in a sexual nature. Those who did medical experiments on women and sexuality violated them were never

[200] Ibid., 281.
[201] Ibid., 7.
[202] Ingelore: Thirteen-year-old German girl raped by her brother and friends; they were part of Hitler Youth.
[203] Nicholas Stargardt, *The German War: A Nation Under Arms, 1939-1945 Citizens and Soldiers* (Basic Books, New York, 2017), 62.
[204] Ingelore Honigstein: Twelve-year-old, deaf girl raped and impregnated by a group of Hitler Youth.

prosecuted for the rapes, only for the experiments. The sterilization treatment for some women took away their femininity and womanhood.[205]

As in the case of Japanese servicemen, few German servicemen were prosecuted for rape and sexual assault after the war. Denmark and France were the only nations who spoke out against the Germans' sexual violence against their girls and women.[206] Jewish girls and Polish women were not interviewed about the rapes that took place during the war. The majority of assaulters got away with their sexual crimes.

After the war ended, German officials, like Japanese officials, attempted to reframe rape by German soldiers. The Japanese military attempted to argue that women in the Comfort Women System were there "voluntarily" and used the "paychecks" as proof that the survivors were prostitutes rather than sex slaves. Germany, on the other hand, leaned into the idea that their servicemen would not engage in such behavior with women deemed to be "racially inferior"; therefore, no rapes "technically" occurred. These attempts at justifying soldier behavior were swept to the side by the Allies in favor of dealing with other war crimes deemed more in need of punishment, such as violations of peace or murder. It was as if no one wanted to look at forced sex slavery or rape as a war crime.

Germany's sexual abuse toward non-Aryan girls and women, as well as male children, was meant not for conquering but humiliation and reinforced the ideology of German superiority and the inferiority of other nations and peoples. At every step, the SS and German soldiers used their power to their own benefit. There were no crimes if the person they assaulted no longer existed or talked. The women and children who had survived the encounters with these soldiers

[205] Paul Weindling, *Victims and Survivors of Nazi Human Experiments: Science and Suffering in the Holocaust* (Bloomsbury Press, 2015), 27.
[206] Dan Plesh, *The Lost History of Prosecuting Axis War Crimes: Human Rights After Hitler* (Georgetown University Press, 2017), 97.

did not often speak up. Even from the Jewish testimonies, the women who had such traumatic encounters do not really talk about nor do the ones who were third parties seem to want to really communicate, the trauma of the experience often being too much to revisit. The Comfort Women had taken a different approach and had become more open by the late twentieth century, and the testimonies were always more in-depth. The Jewish testimonies rarely went into detail about sexual assault and rape, even when documenting their wartime experiences decades later. This is understandable. People will only give what they are willing to share, which is reasonable and an honor if they even talk about it at all. Due to the secrecy and feelings of shame stemming from the rapes or assaults, many stories are lost to time.

The Germans documented almost everything they did; when it came to sexual assault and rape, they were less likely to keep written records, especially when it came to the rape of people categorized as "unworthy" by Nazi ideology. It did not help them to portray their "utopia" and was not worth their time to do so. However, cases of rape and sexual assault frequently occurred; they raped and abused those who, in Nazi ideology, could have destroyed their purity. They hid the evidence and silenced the victims if a crime was committed. The Nazis found ways around the laws permitting them to assault the enemy of their Aryan race. An estimated six million Jewish people died in the Holocaust; out of that a hundred thousand gay men and between 250,000-500,000 Romani women or children.[207] There is no telling how many lost stories and testimonies of rape and sexual assaults we will never hear due to their untimely deaths and heart-breaking murders.

[207] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "*How Many People Did the Nazis Murder*" Holocaust Encyclopedia. How Many People did the Nazis Murder? | Holocaust Encyclopedia (ushmm.org). Accessed on June 23, 2024.

Chapter 3

The United States of America

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The Soviet Union

Warning: The content of this material contains explicate and graphic descriptions of torture and sexual violence with adults and minors, detailed male-on-male sexual violence and suicide that could be disturbing to some readers.

As the war went on and the Axis powers began to suffer increased fatalities, American and Soviet soldiers were not immune to the turbulent environment in which they found themselves. Their surroundings were filled with environmental hardship due to climate, lack of supplies, and intense battles. The Allies in World War II saw horrific and violent actions from the Axis powers. The world Hitler was trying to make and the depth of the war in both European and Pacific theaters left an unsettling context for many men who fought to survive. The Soviet Union and the United States had gone to war against the Axis powers after both being personally attacked at different times by them. Despite their efforts against the militaristic, hyper nationalist regimes in Germany and Japan, in the end, the US and USSR both committed their own sexual war crimes as they pushed Germany out of their conquered territories. These were people they were supposed to protect, but often, American and Soviet servicemen used the name of "justice" to justify their sexual violence. Some Soviet and American soldiers took part in rapes. In the Soviet case, the Rape of Berlin was a war crime that they attempted to justify as "righteous" behavior. At the same time, the American military ignored rape accusations against their own military members. The US used racism as a means of escape for some white soldiers to get away with assault by accusing black soldiers of committing their crimes instead. Both countries took advantage of their power, using sexual assault as a tool of war and disguising it as heroism.

The Americans, unlike the Soviet army, wanted to appear righteous and like superheroes, trying to present themselves in the best possible light.[208] Pictures of soldiers happy with French

[208] Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 229.

women and European women, in general, were displayed in newspapers and newsreels, but unknown truths were hidden behind the pictures. American men often got drunk and grabbed girls[209] off the street and in some cases, young boys as well, which will be detailed later in the chapter. There were cases of gang rape or victims held at knifepoint, and most times, when the American soldiers were caught, it was because their victims were able to escape them.[210]

There are some recurring elements and connections in these instances compared to other nations during World War II. As we have seen, the Germans allowed prostitution to help prevent homosexual acts from taking place, though such acts still occurred.[211] The same occurred with Japan and the Comfort Women System, which was created to provide "sexual comfort" to the men. It was formed after reports of men sexually violating young boys at sea.[212] Similarly, Americans were allowed to visit prostitutes out of fear of homosexual relations.[213] The United States military used the brothel system in both theaters of the war. There were even cases of American servicemen taking part in the Comfort System that the Japanese forces created. [214] In addition, when it came to the Comfort Stations, the United States did not see them as an official war crime.[215] US forces had little to no interest during this time in investigating crimes by Japanese forces against Asian women.[216] Even though brothels and Comfort Women were investigated, it was only for the purpose of gathering information on the Japanese soldier's

[209] Ibid., 75.
[210] J. Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 69.
[211] Richard Plant, *The Nazi War Against Homosexuals: The Pink Triangle* (Henry Holt and Company, 1986), 5.
[212] George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 129.
[213] Mary Louise Roberts, "The Leroy Henry Case: Sexual Violence and Allied Relations in Great Britain, 1944," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 26, no. 3 (2017): 176.
[214] Yuki Tanka, *Japan Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation* (Routledge, 2003), 111.
[215] Ibid., 85.
[216] Ibid., 86.

psychological conditions during warfare.[217] Therefore, American officials took the viewpoint that the lack of evidence and not enough interviews about the Comfort Stations to perceive this to be a human rights violation.[218] For Germany and America, rules and regulations did not stop the Nazi or American soldiers from sexually violating both men and young boys. The Soviet military presumably had its own instances of sexual assaults by soldiers against men and boys, but none have been recorded. Given that there were hardly any Soviet women talking about sexual assault during the war and even post-war, it is unsurprising that instances of soldier sexual violence against men and boys would also go undiscussed.

The American military had its own military court system. There needed to be witnesses and vital proof of the sexual crime that was committed.[219] Rape was usually a hushed word, something that seems to be silenced during war. The United States military and government needed to uphold a clean, heroic look to preserve the image of the US military as the untarnished heroes and, more importantly, "white" men looking "clean and pristine.[220]" In war mythos, heroes cannot harm; they only save the weaker and needy. The portrayal of American servicemen as the heroes of World War II brought a sense of morale to the Allied forces, which was central to Home Front propaganda.[221] American servicemen could "do no harm". Behind those upbeat pictures, however, lay scenes of war and hardship. Soldiers in newly liberated regions of Europe often went out, most likely to celebrate or drink away their pains. Some men secured consensual partners, while others grabbed, raped, and sexually assaulted girls off the streets.[222]

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[217] Ibid., 85.
[218] Ibid., 85-86.
[219] R. Pannacci, "Sex, Military Brothels, and Gender Violence during the Italian Campaign in the USSR, 1941–3," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 55, Vol. 1 (2020).
[220] Mary Louise Roberts*, What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 61-62.
[221] Ibid., 10.
[222] Ibid., 75.

American soldiers were intended to represent safety. Unfortunately, the ones who did not sometimes used force to get what they wanted. Scholars suggest that most of these assailants enjoyed using a knife on their victims as a threat to subdue them.[223] Knives were the most common weapon on hand, and 41% of victims in Britain had it used on them by United States soldiers.[224] Some United States soldiers found women, or even sometimes young boys, walking in the street. After taking them to an isolated location, they concealed themselves in the darkness to commit their crime. In most cases, the men were drunk at the time they assaulted their victims.[225]

Teenager Ken Paterson, on March 21, 1944, in Honiton, southwestern England, was coming home from the train station around 10 pm at night and was grabbed by three American soldiers. One soldier served as the lookout while the other two orally abused Paterson. Later, when the lookout soldier left, the other two stayed and sexually assaulted him by sodomizing him seven times, taking turns. He was able to escape once but was captured before he could officially be free from his tormentors.[226]

> Once, as the men momentarily relaxed their grip on him, Paterson grabbed his trousers and 'took to my heels' ran across a field. After hurdling a wire fence, however, he fell heavily in the dark and was caught by the corporal who this time compelled Paterson to masturbate him.[227]

[223] J. Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 69.
[224] Ibid., 69.
[225] Ibid., 68.
[226] R. M. Douglas, "The US Army and Male Rape during the Second World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 56, Issue 2 (2021).
[227] Ibid.

Paterson's mother took his aggressors to court the next day. Because the men were so drunk, one tried to use it as his alibi, saying he had no memory of the night. [228] He went on to blame Paterson, saying that Paterson wanted it and even asked to pleasure them:[229]

> while his supposed alcohol-induced amnesia likewise extended to the moments before he found himself in a field with the victim, he definitely recollected how the British boy said something to the effect of 'let me give this fellow some,' and when he made this remark he came over and took my penis in his hand and play with it, Never, Hamilton, (corporal) went about the way he was being treated and the only reason ' I had anything to do with him at all was because he asked to give me some.[230]

The fact of the matter was that the soldiers were found guilty because of incriminating evidence and the advocacy of Paterson's mother. At the crime scene, officials found seven condoms on the ground, as well as fresh footprints and broken branches.[231] There was blood from Paterson on the corporal's clothes and even scratches and abrasions on the officer. Everything added up. United States military law tried Paterson's assaulters, convicting them, dishonorably discharging them, and sending them to the Federal Penitentiary prison for ten to twelve years.[232] In this case, there was some justice, a rarity for most victims.

Unfortunately, not all reports against accused US soldiers were investigated or acknowledged. In June 1946, on the outskirts of Munich in a wealthy district, a woman who offered no name but identified herself as a saleswoman walked down the street at night. She denied the advances of two American soldiers, but they did not take no for an answer. One dragged her into a treed area and raped her. After telling her he would kill her if she told his comrade, he left her, and then his comrade came and sexually violated her as well. She went

[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid.

straight to her doctor, who confirmed her assault and contacted the local police. In the end, her story was not talked about, and there was no trial or justice.[233] She later recalled:

> I said in English: 'No, I won't come with you; I'm a respectable girl.' Then he pointed his rifle at me and said forcefully: 'you will come with me' I stuffed my knitting in my handbag and tried to run away. He grabbed me by the arm, pointed his weapon at me, and pulled me into the undergrowth…after the intercourse, he was friendly and instructed me not to speak of the incident to anyone, not even his comrade.[234]

Thus, impunity reigned for some perpetrators of sexual violence.

The legal and racial prejudices of the United States also manifested themselves in the treatment of soldiers who committed sexual violence, replicating racial hierarchies found back in the continental US. As Mary Louise Roberts noted, it was "easier" for white American servicemen to get away with rape. She found that

> White Soldiers could rape French women with impunity if an African American were in the vicinity and plausibly blamed. In several cases, black soldiers were picked up in the vicinity of the rape charge on those grounds alone, without any physical evidence or witness identification to prove their crime.[235]

Black Americans who served in Europe were not necessarily safe from prejudice. It was easier for a man of color to be prosecuted over a crime of rape than a white male soldier.[236] Historian Miriam Gebhardt indicates the United States Army's focal points for statistics that had a higher population of Black soldiers accused or convicted of rape did not go out of their way to look over statistics in other areas with fewer minority soldiers.[237] Thus making it, statistically, seem that only the African American servicemen were the ones causing sexual assaults on women in Europe.

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[233] Miriam Gebhardt, *Crimes Unspoken: Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War II* (Polity Press, 2020), 109.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 219.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid., 195.

The American military used racism and prejudice in the prosecution of rape cases; soldiers of color were less likely to have a fair trial. Some European countries, like Britain and France, also had their own racial discrimination against people of color, with ideals on how black Americans "behaved."[238] Women would accuse them of sexual assault. Some would take advantage of the fact that people would not think badly about blaming Black American soldiers or even looking down on it.[239] Such beliefs reflected the realities of racial segregation in the United States, with strict laws aimed at the minority citizens of the United States. Such inequalities regularly led to cases of lynching African Americans for even looking at a white woman. These biases did not disappear when American troops went to the European theater. Racist beliefs and ideology played an important part in judging people's innocence or guilt. The likelihood of an African American serviceman getting a fair trial was slim to none, at home or in the military.[240] The United States military was an extension of 1940s American society in many ways, and the perception of racial difference was part of how it operated. Officials in the United States military from "Jim Crow America" were more than willing to prosecute black soldiers over white soldiers for the crime of rape against white European women.[241]

The case of black American soldier Leroy Henry, stationed in Great Britain, is representative of this experience. A British woman named Irene Maude Lilley accused him of rape. She claimed he knocked on her door at night, proclaiming he was lost, and she graciously went with him to help find the military base.[242] She said he attacked her on the way there, and the following day, when her husband found her in a ditch with him, she said it was sexual

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[238] J. Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 91-92.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid., 92.
[242] Mary Louise Roberts, "The Leroy Henry Case: Sexual Violence and Allied Relations in Great Britain, 1944," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 26, no. 3 (2017): 402.

assault. The trial was more about racial injustice towards Henry and siding with the white victim than a fair, evidence-based case.[243] There was no evidence of actual rape, but according to Henry's account, it was a consensual transaction gone wrong. Henry claimed he saw her at bars and paid her before to have sex with him. It was not an unusual request for him since, according to his account, he had previously paid her for sex,[244] but that night of the accusation was different. Instead of having intercourse in the pub, Lilley requested it take place at her house. According to Henry, she asked for more money than usual, and when he refused, she became hostile and threatened to "get him in trouble."[245]

There was also a problem with Henry's two different statements. One a white Marshal forced him to sign on May 6th, 1944, proclaiming his guilt; a second Henry made himself on May 10th, 1944. The first was written on May 6 and said that:

> Once Lilley Was outside her house, this Leroy became violent, threatening Lilley with a knife if she did not cooperate. 'I put my peter in her' he recounts this Henry, 'I fucked her, for what seem to be two or three minutes, I lost my load in her'.[246]

The statement was written by a court Marshal who put into his own words what happened that night according to Lilley.

The second statement, signed May 10, 1944, was directly from Henry himself, but its wording and presentation were entirely different from those of the previous statement. Henry described sex with Lilley in distinctive terms. On two previous occasions, he testified, he paid her to have sex. As Henry testified, "with her right hand she pulled up her left leg of her bloomers to one side and held it over a while, I put my outfit in her." In similar language at the trial, Henry testified that "she got on my coat and pulled her dress up and pulled her bloomers

[243] Ibid., 408.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid..
[246] Ibid., 409.

over and we went on and done what we intended to do."[247] Neighbors' testimonies seemed to support Henry's account. They indicated a distrust of Lilley because she was part of the "good-time-girls,"[248] a term used to describe women who were known to go out and voluntarily have intercourse with men for money. Many women found this a means to support themselves and their families during the war. Despite this evidence, Henry was found guilty of rape by a US court-martial and sentenced to hang.[249] A group of British citizens believed Henry's story against Lilley's and took it upon themselves to petition for his release. They gathered thirty-three thousand signatures in support of a reprieve, which led to his acquittal.[250]

This entire military trial system during this time period brings up multiple problems. It is an excellent example of how unjust the court systems, in this case, the US military system, were when it came to rape trials, particularly for men of color. For an American serviceman to be convicted of any sexual assault, two things had to be proven: one, sexual penetration had occurred, and second, that the accuser resisted the assault.[251]

In Ken Paterson's trial, he had been able to show both forced penetration and resistance from his attacker. When he accused the American soldiers of rape, all the evidence was clearly at the crime scene. In Leroy Henry's case, there was ample evidence proving he was innocent of the rape charge. He proclaimed he had consensual intercourse with Lilley, judging from the evidence. The case became an important precedent on how the United States military handled sex crime trials. In Henry's case, he was the victim of an unjust, biased system. Historians have pointed out that he was a victim of prejudice and racism in the judicial court system.[252] Lilley

[247] Ibid., 409.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid., 402.
[250] Ibid., 403.
[251] Ibid., 408.
[252] Ibid.

herself was being used for sexual intercourse with men; being a "good time girl" meantshe was prostituting herself.[253] Why she did it or whether or not it was voluntary is up to interpretation; one article said Lilley was racist, yet she was seen having intercourse with African American men. Others have made the argument that Lilley was raped by a man that night, just not Henry.[254]

The story about Lilley and Henry is complex, and historians still disagree with key elements of the incident. The evidence points to Henry being innocent, yet the court sided with Lilley. While this is one example, there were others where a black American soldier was accused and hanged for the rape crimes of others or due to false accusations.[255] Looking at the studies when it came to sexual assault in the United States military, the focus seems more on the injustice over wrongfully convicted African American soldiers.[256] This is significant, as such works address the injustice of primarily pushing the blame of rape on Black soldiers without evidence who were serving their country . Innocent African American men did die in the name of lies. Women were raped, most likely by white American soldiers, but these cases often were quickly covered up or not talked about; about eleven thousand people were presumed raped by American soldiers in Europe.[257] Despite the war narrative of fighting for freedom in both theaters, rape by American servicemen occurred and was often covered up or dismissed when it was not blamed on an innocent serviceman. American military officials claimed that the American people were more willing to believe a "Black" man would rape a young girl then than

[253] Ibid., 411.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 227.
[256] J. Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), xvii-xviii.
[257] Miriam Gebhardt*, Crimes Unspoken: Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War II* (Polity Press, 2020), 17-18.

a "White" man. This is why establishing the racial framework of the United States in the 1940s is so important.

Wartime propaganda portrayed American servicemen as heroes, yet not all were.[258] While attention has fallen on the scale of Soviet sexual violence in the invasion of German-held territories, the United States was not exempt from such violence. According to historian Miriam Gebhardt, there were instances of soldiers going into the newly occupied Germany and entering houses while people were asleep and dragging them downstairs.[259] Gebhardt reports that "the women would then be raped one after another. The soldiers would leave the house telling their comrades on the way where they could find women".[260] The American military came, leaving their own marks on the countries that they entered. American servicemen also abused them, and German men in most cases could not do anything about it.[261] Additionally, given the hostility toward Germany as the United States's enemy in the war, GIs could and did assault "German women not only more often but more brutally than they had earlier the women of their Allies in Britain and France. The German women were more frequently injured, beaten with fists and weapons, abused more frequently, penetrated orally or anally, according to the military prosecutor general."[262] An American journalist, Meyer Levin, discussed how he wanted to rape women to get justice for what Germany had done to others. He recalled:

> in war there is a reversal of the general code of the community of men. It is right to kill, and with this sanction comes a compulsion to reverse all other civilized injunctions: to steal, lie, blaspheme, and rape. Thus theft is transformed into loot; rape in Germany was accomplished through the medium of a bar of chocolate and was known as fraternization.[263]

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[258] Mary Louise Roberts*, What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 57.
[259] Miriam Gebhardt, *Crimes Unspoken: Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War II* (Polity Press, 2020), 84.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Ibid., 85.
[263] Ibid., 107.

Clearly, sexual violence as a means of perceived retributive "justice" against Germany was not merely a Soviet violation of human rights. Rape, as was often the case throughout the countries examined in this thesis, was a tool of power in war.

Nor were the victims of United States sexual violence only adult women. There were cases of American soldiers raping young kids, female and male. Erika L., a young German girl who was only fifteen, was forced to testify against eight American soldiers who sexually assaulted her.[264] When testifying, she was unable to withstand the hours of being crossed-examined; she continually broke down when trying to tell her story. The American doctor at the hospital said she was stable enough to be able to take the stand, but Erika L. was too emotionally traumatized to talk about her experience. After being questioned and cross-examined three times by the American military investigators, nothing came of the reported attack on her.

In one particularly sad case, in late April 1945, a six-year-old boy named Detlef Fischerbaur was playing outside his house at Oberkassel in Rhineland when two white male American soldiers took him. The two white servicemen were dressed in Air Force uniforms. Detlef was assaulted both orally and anally. At least one assailant bit him. Detlef's aunt reported the assault to the US military police. During the investigation, the young child was able to talk about what happened.[265] He testified,

> I tried to yell but he put his hand over my mouth. He showed me a package of cigarettes and told me he would give them to me after he had done it, 'in the cellar Fischerbaur was orally and anally raped at knifepoint. He was released and ran back home – his 32-year-old aunt, Ingid Katz; later testified, crying very bitterly. Finding bitemarks on the boy's body, Katz took him to the Dusseldorf-Heerdt hospital. Medical examination confirmed attack revealing anal trauma.[266]

[264] Ibid., 110.
[265] R. M. Douglas, "The US Army and Male Rape during the Second World War," *Journal of Contemporary History,* Volume 56, Issue 2 (2021).
[266] Ibid.

Despite his testimony, when he had to identify his attackers from a lineup of the entire Anti-Tank Company 302nd Infantry Regiment, he was unable to do so.[267] There was not even any evidence that the attackers belonged to this unit. Consequently, Detlef Fischerbaur's attackers were never found or punished.

When considered in comparison with the trial of Leroy Henry, the different treatment of "White" and "Black" American soldiers is stark. The two white servicemen were even seen trying to lure another young boy by neighbors when the police tried to capture them.[268] In these cases, the soldiers denied the rape accusations and refused to acknowledge the victims. In the case of Private Paul Montoya, he was accused of capturing boys by holding them by knifepoint or even with brute strength. The victims' ages ranged from ten to twelve years old.[269] Thomas Draper, the most outspoken of the four young victims, was adamant in talking about the unfairness of their trial. He was open when he reported the assault, yet his ordeal was not taken seriously. Even though Draper immediately complained to the military police about the assault. The military police (MPs), he later testified, merely "laughed at him' and took no further action".[270] Likewise, the defense counsel at the US subsequent court-martial seemed to blame Draper, asking why he took off his clothes for Montoya instead of fighting him or keeping them on, even when Montoya ordered him to. The court transcript noted Draper "sardonically responds, you would of done it too if he had a knife to your back."[271] The other three boys Montoya was accused of attacking had similar experiences but were only believed when

[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid.
[271] Ibid.

Montoya was caught trying to lure one of the previous victims again in his drunken state of mind.[272] At the end of the trial, Montoya was sentenced to thirty years in prison.

Though this case resulted in justice for the victims, they still had to relive their traumas as they were forced to testify in court in an era before court advocates and social workers. Historian R.M. Douglas mentions how the child was more mature beyond the years to understand what happened to him.[273] Nevertheless, he was still just a child who had to live with the weight of knowing what had happened to him. Furthermore, Montoya's fate may have been unique. Scholars have found that those convicted of sexual assault were most likely released when their sentences were served or even reduced after wartime. Men who were arrested for the crime of sodomy were often released or had their sentences reduced so the court system could wipe their hands of the charges.[274]

Not all victims of sexual assault were European civilians; such crimes also occurred within the ranks of the American military. Some high-ranking officials used their superior status over some men to gain sexual pleasure. Most of these encounters were not consensual. In one instance,

> GI Roberts Peters remembered how when an older GI named Wisher got caught in a pup tent engaged in fellatio with a platoon sergeant, the commanding officer said this to his men: you know the penalty for putting another man's cock in your mouth? You rot in prison for life. You'll get f-ed good there[275]

It is unclear if this encounter was consensual. There was also a lack of urgency in what Peters witnessed; it was more of a disgusted reaction as though what he witnessed was consensual rather than rape. Perhaps what he witnessed was consensual by both parties. It is difficult to

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[272] Ibid.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Mary Louis Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 174.

know, given the homophobia of the 1940s, whether this was a consensual sexual encounter or assault. Sex between men was a forbidden topic in the United States military and the reason why soldiers were "allowed" to engage with prostitutes without significant ramifications.

Homosexuality was still illegal in the United States in the 1940s. Nevertheless, what would have happened if it was not consensual? The United States military generally avoided dealing with sexual misconduct, even when it happened to their own servicemen. There are records where servicemen were caught raping their fellow soldiers.[276] Some cases were clearly not consensual, as with Sergeant Kyle Warren, whom Lieutenant George Earle assaulted after a long night of poker. Earle crawled into bed with Warren, held a hunting knife up to Warren's neck, and forced Warren to do lewd acts on him. When Warren tried to escape, "Earle stabbed and slashed him in the groin, both arms, left thigh, and foot. Alerted by Warrens's cries for help, officers found him covered in blood from head to foot."[277] After Warren brought this story to military leadership, Earle was only sentenced to ten years.[278]

Fellow soldiers were not the only victims taken by force and assaulted; so too were civilian workers for the United States military. Javesh Anand, an Indian civilian laborer worker at a United States Military Airfield, was working with coworker, Rupak Ajamal, when [279]

> Both men were pulled into a room by Private Andrew White Jr., who then made both Anand and Ajamal strip naked and proceeded to use an electric torch to search their bodies. Afterward, White told Ajamal, the older of the two, to go, leaving Anand alone with White. White "anally rap[ed]" and beat him [Anand]. When White was finished, he ordered Anand to dress and marched him down a path at gunpoint, and then fired four shots at him from behind at gunpoint.[280]

[276] R. M. Douglas, "The US Army and Male Rape during the Second World War," *Journal of Contemporary History,* Volume 56, Issue 2 (2021).
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.

Only one bullet met its mark, and Anand was taken to the hospital, where he eventually recovered. White Jr., who did not feel he had done anything wrong, confessed everything to the investigators. White was only convicted since he made a full confession, although records do not indicate what his sentence was.[281]

The Soviets turned to sexual violence and rape as they pushed the Axis armies west. The Soviet Union is well known for the Rape of Berlin, where the soldiers assaulted approximately 20,000 to 100,000 women as the Red Army surrounded the capital city in the last weeks of the war.[282] Joseph Stalin encouraged acts of vengeance and called for no mercy for the Germans. On May 1st, 1943, Stalin made a speech under *Order of the Day No.195*, in which he stated:[283]

> Soviet citizens from being driven away to German slavery and from extermination by the Hitlerite beasts; that they take merciless revenge on the German invaders for the blood and tears of our wives and children, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters; that they assist the Red Army heart and soul in its struggle with the base Hitlerite enslavers.[284]

Many of those who participated in the invasion took part in sexual crimes and justified it as an act of vengeance. Stalin was vengeful towards the German population because his territory was invaded when German soldiers came into his land, betraying the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.[285] Hitler betrayed his non-aggression agreement with Stalin and sent his German soldiers into the Soviet Union to take over and conquer the country. The German Army ultimately failed, but during the invasion, they pillaged the countryside and city.[286] The Rape of Berlin in the spring of 1945 was revenge for the brutal bloodletting at battles like Stalingrad and Kiev, and a

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[281] Ibid.
[282] Miriam Gebhardt, *Crimes Unspoken: Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War II* (Polity Press, 2020), 18
[283] J.V Stalin, *Order of the Day, No.195,* (Stalin Archive) May 1,1943, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1943/05/01.htm.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Nicole Ann Dombrowski, *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without Consent* (Ballantine Books,1993), 168.
[286] Timothy Snyder, *Bloodland: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (Basic Books, 2010), 170.

way for Stalin to get back at Hitler. The reasoning behind why Stalin was indifferent to the rape and sexual assaults that happened is because the Germans were accused of coming to the Soviet Union and sexually violating and torturing Soviet women, "justifying" the act of violence against the German women, and yet, sadly, if people try to find information about German men raping Soviet women, there are barely any testimonies.[287] Most likely, they had to keep silent; the women who were assaulted after the Rape of Berlin never were permitted to talk about the event because things like that were not condoned under Soviet rule.[288] It is worth noting that Nazi racial ideology, in addition to targeting Jews, Romani, and the disabled, also categorized Slavic peoples as inferior and thus unworthy. We need to point out the prevalence of blaming the victim in rape cases, but also that in the postwar years, many Germans felt they were victimized by the war's end. The many women who had suffered became folded into a larger narrative.

Amongst the liberties the Soviets took was to have sex with women anywhere they invaded.[289] The Red Army atrocities against women were not isolated to the Rape of Berlin. Like the Nazis, the Soviets went into newly claimed nations and raped women and children as an act of terror and ownership, a trophy for their spoils, or an act of revenge for everything the Soviet Union suffered during the war. Freed Jewish women witnessed the rape of German women in concentration camps and were often victims themselves of the Red Army.[290] Some scholars estimate the Soviet soldiers committed 860,000 sexual assaults or rapes of women in Germany alone by the end of the war, including anywhere from 20,000 to 100,000 women in Berlin in

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[287] Miriam Gebhardt, *Crimes Unspoken: Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War II* (Polity Press, 2020), 25-26.
[288] Nicole Ann Dombrowski, *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without Consent* (Ballantine Books,1993), 176.
[289] Miriam Gebhardt, *Crimes Unspoken: Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War II* (Polity Press, 2020), 64.
[290] Mary Louise Roberts, "The Leroy Henry Case: Sexual Violence and Allied Relations in Great Britain, 1944,: *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 26, no. 3,(2017): 411.

1945.[291] Soviet soldiers committed rape as "revenge" for what the Germans did to their Soviet women and girls.[292]

A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in a Conquered City captures what the experience of Soviet invasion was like for many women during the Rape of Berlin in April 1945. One of the key things mentioned is that some of the Soviet soldiers were adamant that this was justice for their mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters for what the German men did to them.[293] Anonymous went through such brutalization that her friend had a hard time believing that German men would do anything like this to women. German propaganda held that Nazi soldiers were supposed to be above such acts of disgrace, and they were trained through the ideology that German soldiers could do no wrong. Anonymous also admits she heard whispers from other girls that their men might have done the same.[294] The only reason the German women had any idea of what the Red Army would do to them was propaganda, letting the public know the invasion of the Red Army was coming and that they were going to go after their women.[295] German women had warned each other through word of mouth that this horrendous act might happen to them, being forced to have sexual acts with the Red Army soldiers.[296] The Germans, with their Nazi ideal of the "pure Aryan Race," played a vital role in German men wanting to protect the perceived purity of German women from rape by Soviet soldiers.

With the Soviet invasion, however, many were unable to do anything and would sometimes take extreme actions to prevent their family members from being assaulted by the

[291] Miriam Gebhardt, *Crimes Unspoken: Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War II* (Polity Press, 2020), 18.
[292] Ibid., 64.
[293] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in a Conquered City* (Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 133.
[294] Ibid., 133.
[295] Miriam Gebhardt, *Crimes Unspoken: Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War II* (Polity Press, 2020), 71.
[296] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in a Conquered City* (Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 17.

Red Army. This was the case with Martin Brundel and Christian Kunst. They could not stand the idea of the Soviets touching their family.[297] To preserve the "purity" of their family, they murdered their entire family. Both men took their families to the river, slitting the throats of or beating to death their wives and children. Both men were going to commit suicide but were unable to bring themselves to end their own lives.[298] They went on and lived their lives, blaming the Red Army for their family's death. This is just another story about how victims of sexual assault could not find justice or compassion but were even sometimes victimized and murdered by their own family members at even the possibility of sexual assault.

The women in Berlin did not have it easy; during the day, they were forced to house the Soviets, and some acted well-mannered. It was the night the women feared. Little girls and elderly women were not given safety; if the Soviet soldiers desired it, they would have anyone. Many females tried to find high-ranking officers because they knew they would be protected if they could find someone in the higher ranks.[299] For these women, it was about surviving.

In Anonymous's case, she did this to gain the little control she could have. Not that she had many choices. It was the only way she could survive. She did not love the man, but she knew she had to do this to survive. She recalled that:

> I can control him, something I didn't dare with Anatol, not that easily, though Anatol was extremely good-natured with me. But he so avid, such a bull, so strong without meaning to he might give me a little box in the ear … and end up spitting a tooth- just from sheer excess strength, sheer bearishness. But I can talk with the major. Which still isn't an answer to the question of whether I should now call myself a whore, since I am essentially living off my body, trading it for something to eat.[300]

[297] Miriam Gebhardt, *Crimes Unspoken: Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War II* (Polity Press, 2020), 33-34.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Ibid., 42.
[300] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in a Conquered City*, (Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 116.

She even found ways not to have sex with the General. She talks about how she and other girls would play games to get the officers drunk to prevent him from assaulting her.

> I encouraged his men to drink and play records, asked them to sing, which they were happy to do, drink, play cards until Anatol kicked them out. In bed I stalled some more and finally, after he had gotten his way once, that was it for a moment, I was tired and exhausted and needed to rest. I gave him a sermon and told him I was sure he was no "hooligan" but a considerate refined man of tender feelings. He accepted it, though more than a little reluctantly, with occasional relapses into bullishness, which I managed to put a stop to. Naturally, I didn't sleep a wink.[301]

Sometimes, such strategies did not work, however. Such was the case for Elvira, a woman who worked in a liquor distillery. One night when she was working, twenty Soviets came in and sexually assaulted her. Anonymous described the woman's chest as bruised and bitten everywhere. Anonymous herself could not write in more detail about Elvira's state or mainly the physical shape Elvira's body was in when she saw her. Elvira could not and would not say much, most likely being in shock and fearful of further violence as she endured the trauma and its aftermath.[302]

Sometimes, Soviet soldiers themselves substantiated such violence. One soldier kept a diary that described his side of the Berlin rapes and his thoughts on the women of Germany. He discussed an encounter with a young girl whom he first thought she was older than she really was; he said this was his greatest sin.[303] The young woman he thought he was going to have intercourse with was sixteen years old.[304] The description of this young girl was not romantic or heartfelt. Although he seemed fairly excited about the young girl's description, he was rather icy and distant when he first mentions her.[305] Even though she excited him, in the end, he could not

[301] Ibid., 123-124.
[302] Ibid., 135- 136.
[303] Vladimir Gelfand, "Diary Letters," *The Rapper-Wowa,* 2024.
[304] Ibid.
[305] Ibid.

proceed, not because of the horrors of sexual assault but because some small part of him thought her being underage was wrong. “I regretted her and stopped. Again examined her all from her legs and head. The small little body bitten, scratched until it bleeds”.[306] This was not the last time he engaged in sexual assault; later on, he joined a crowd and grabbed women without a care.[307] Being around such violence, at some point, it had become normalized to him.[308]

The German women's approach to this rampant sexual violence was far different than how the Comfort Women dealt with the situation. Where the Japanese authority's intention was to isolate the Comfort Women and make them feel alone, the Red Army did no such thing. The Berlin women stuck together and faced it as a community, relying on each other.[309] They shared stories of what happened to them and what they saw and endured during the nights. After the war, they were not permitted to talk about their experiences when the men came home. It was a secret that only those women had knowledge about. On the eastern front, they were not allowed to talk about the violent rapes that the Red Army took part in.[310] In the postwar decades, there was a sense in both East and West Germany that the war was an off-limit topic. Few discussed their participation in the war or what happened during the Soviet advancement. In Anonymous’s book, she talks about how the day hours were entirely different from the night hours. There was not much anyone could do, but sadly, they lived with their experiences, and the women kept to themselves out of fear of the ramifications that could come from what happened. As the men came back, those who knew about what happened to a loved one who had been assaulted did not end in a comforting embrace from the men; instead, in some cases, women died by suicide.

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[306] Ibid.
[307] Miriam Gebhardt, *Crimes Unspoken: Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War II* (Polity Press, 2020), 68.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in a Conquered City*, (Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 147.
[310] Ibid., xi.

Ruth-Friedrich bore witness to such inhumanity, recalling a case where a father "gives his daughter, who has been defiled twelve times, a rope. She takes it obediently and hangs herself on the nearest mullion. 'If you are defiled, there nothing left but death.'"[311]

It was not only women in Berlin who suffered the wrath of the Red Army as they moved through Eastern Europe toward Germany. Women in towns near labor camps and in concentration camps also witnessed and experienced the cruelty of the Red Army. One report circulated of Soviet soldiers going after their own women and even Red Army nurses. Nadia, a Red Army nurse prisoner at the Ravensbrück camp, recounted,

> There were many other women here too, not just the red army girls, so we were taken to a big building like a warehouse. We were led into a big room all the time they were harassing us but were tired and needed sleep so we went into the room. It was on the first floor. The soldiers followed us. We shut the door, trying to keep them out. Yavgenia Lazarevna tried to barricade us in. They shouted to us to come out. They ask for the youngest women. It was terrifying. I was one of the youngest in the group. Then they said: 'Anyone who's a virgin come out to us.' They started banging at the door and on the window and I saw one man swing in at the window and fall into the room drunk. They were starting to break down the doors and Yevgenia Lazarevna tried to do anything she could to protect us, telling them we were red army women who had been at the front at Stalingrad, Leningrad and the Crimea. We had been in the concentration camp for two years. 'you can kill me but don't touch the girls,' she said.[312]

The Soviets also targeted Jewish women. Zophia Shulman stated it was the Soviets who were the "wild ones" when it came to taking pleasure with Jewish girls and women like Bella Simon Pasternak[313] and Zophia Shulman.[314] After liberating Jewish women from concentration camps, some Soviet soldiers had no compunction about having their way with women, no matter where they were and who they were committing the crime against.

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[311] Miriam Gebhardt, *Crimes Unspoken: Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War II* (Polity Press, 2020), 57.
[312] Sarah Helm, *Ravensbrück : Life and Death in Hitler's Concentration Camp For Women* (Penguin Random House, 2015), 642.
[313] RG-50.477.1453, Oral History interview With Zophia Shulman, Oral Interviews of The Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives Branch in July 2007.
[314] RG-50.106.0081, Oral History Interview with Bella Simon Pasternak, Oral Interviews of the for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Oral History branch conducted this interview, Rockville, Md, on October 22, 1997.

In the daylight, the Red Army looked as if they were liberating heroes, yet at night, they wanted more than just being heroes. Girls took to hiding and running in fright from the soldiers, as in the case of Krystyna Zajac, who recalled that:

> Immediately they saw us they chased us. A Soviet said he wanted to dance with me. Then tried to rape us. I fell down. They even tried to get my mother and raped her. We said we were Pole, not Germans, and we were prisoners, but they didn't care. Then in the night, they killed a mother who was protecting her daughter. Eventually, we found a safer place in a German house.[315]

Bella Simon Pasternak, a young Jewish girl recently liberated from a concentration camp, also recounted the frequency of abuse of sexual assault and rape at the hands of Soviet soldiers. [316] Masha Loen, another young Jewish girl who was liberated and ill trying to go home, was saved from such a fate at the last minute when a group of women grabbed her, brought her into their apartment, and then used her sickly state to prevent the Soviets from attacking them.[317] Loen looked so bad that the Soviet soldiers thought she would give them typus, so they left:

> German. Jewish. It didn't matter. They were getting drunk and raping them. So what they did is they – dragged me and that little girl into the apartment where they lived. Six women. And if you put a sign up that it is typhus, the Russians didn't care, they just tore it down and they came in. They took the scarf off my head, and they gave me a bottle with medicine. And send me out in the front room. And turn on the light, and the Russians. As drunk as they were they were running. Because they know there was typhus in that – I was over already. But still looked like a musselwomen. you know. Sick with a scarf on my head. They start running. And this is how I saved six women from being raped by the Russians .[318]

Paulina Buchenhoiz was also singled out and threatened if she did not show up to a Russian officer's room that, they would take five other girls in her place. She told other girls about it, and

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[315] Sarah Helm, *Ravensbrück : Life and Death in Hitler's Concentration Camp For Women*, (Penguin Random House, 2015) 617.
[316] RG-50.106.0081, Oral History Interview with Bella Simon Pasternak, Oral Interviews of the for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Oral History branch conducted this interview, Rockville, Md, on October 22, 1997.
[317] RG-50.549.02.0053, Interviewed with Masha Leon, Oral history interviews of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Oral History Branch, Studio City, CA, July 11, 1999.
[318] Ibid.

they hid that night. However, the night was not without a price. A fifteen-year-old girl was raped three times that night in place of Buchenhoiz.[319]

> The same evening a few Russians soldiers visited us in the barn. We talked willingly; they were our liberators after all. Before leaving, one soldier whispered to me that he will come to me at night. Then came a warning: 'and if you don't want me, there will be five others in my place!' [320]

The Russian soldiers knew the women were running from them; finding them one night, a soldier yelled at them, not understanding why these girls ran from them and preferred to sleep in the barn with livestock instead of them. Buchenoiz recalls this as well, "Suddenly, the door opened with a loud bang and a soldier popped up unexpectedly. He burst in an angry tirade and shouted resentment. Accusing us of preferring the animals to the Russian soldiers. We got up from the floor, ran out ".[321]

Though many, like Paulina Buchenhoiz, initially saw the Soviets as people who came to save them from the cruelty of the Germans, they soon realized Soviet soldiers were a violating threat as those soldiers sexually assaulted and raped many young women and even girls.[322]

> We heard the girls pleading with him and crying. We became panicky and one after the other went down the narrow stairway and left the house. On the way we heard screaming and the louder it got, the faster we ran. Five of us couldn't help one girl, so afraid were we of the soldier and his gun. When we reached the barn it was night. Some women heard us come in and ask what happened. But we didn't want to talk.[323]

Inspired by Stalin's calls for vengeance, many Red Army soldiers acted in "revenge rape" on the German women; the soldiers took it upon themselves to branch out to all women, even those

[319] 1994.A.0198.1, Permanent Collection, *Pauline Buchenhoiz Memoirs*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC, 1994.
[320] Ibid.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid.

they were supposed to rescue and protect. Taking women without their consent now seemed like a given right to the Soviet soldiers and not rape at all. The idea that forced sex would be just given to them seemed to be normal thinking for the Red Army. After all, there were no consequences, and more importantly, they were encouraged to do so by their leadership.

Both America and the Soviet Union were rising superpowers, and both played a part in sexual violence in the war. For American servicemen, it was easier for white men to escape punishment for sexual crimes than it was for African Americans due to racial inequalities in United States institutions, military and otherwise. Victims of homosexual assault barely saw any justice in the acts of sodomy, and the victims often hid their cases out of shame and the illegality of such acts in the United States. While the Soviet military condoned their soldier's use of sexual violence as a method of "revenge," the American military authorities chose to "cover-up" cases of rape where they could. The Soviet soldiers were allowed to do whatever they wanted with any women they encountered. They grabbed whoever they wanted with no actual consequences for their action. Both countries avoided taking accountability for the actions of soldiers who committed such crimes. The women who suffered and their voices that were lost under the superpower's blame game were the actual victims.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated how sexual violence was used as a weapon throughout the war and on both sides. In both the Pacific and the European Theaters, there were sex crimes during the course of World War II. The urgency to punish sexual violations seemed lax and not of importance during the war, regardless of whether the perpetrator was Axis or Ally. When it came to the knowledge about this crime being committed, the countries mentioned in this thesis had at least a basic understanding that it was a crime to rape and violate another person. Since they knew of this, they each tried to justify their actions or wash their hands of the crimes, making it less evident that the crime took place on the country's home front and easier not to confront the war violation that took place.

Creating systems of blame and wrongful justification for the acts of sexual assault and violence made it an overshadowed part of history that should be looked at with a more critical eye. War and violence have occurred for centuries; sexual violence and assault are typically perceived as uncomfortable and taboo subjects; no country wants to admit their soldiers take part in such crimes, and yet it still happens and is often not shown. Neither do countries want to admit that their soldiers took part in any war crime against humanity. These types of crimes would not look good on their image. World War II was not the first war to use sexual violence as a weapon, nor will it be the last time it will be used during a war. It has continued even after World War II, with an updated Geneva Convection of Article 27 in the section on “Treatment I. General Observation:” “Women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honor, in

particular against rape, against enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault."[324] When this item was updated in August 1949, it recognized the act of sexual violence as a war crime and an act of cruelty to a person that should be seen as a crime. It built upon the International Convention of 1921's Treaty for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children, preventing forced prostitution and brothels from being created. Despite the code, some signatories ignored this international treaty's stipulations on sexual trafficking and violence. By doing so, they acknowledged the crime. Japan signed it in 1925[325] with the expectation of the territory that they owned and used as legality to help create the Comfort System and justify the system as being "not illegal." Germany signed the agreement as well in 1924[326], and they, too, had their own brothels during the duration of the war. Thus, even before the updated version of the article Geneva Conviction in 1949, the men who signed the international treaties through the course of the 1920s for their countries knew that acts of forced sexual violence and assault were internationally condemned and illegal in the terms of the treaty Japan itself signed.

Treaties, agreements, and laws are only beneficial for the people and the countries who hold true to their words. Those who really want to work around these laws and rules or completely ignore them will do so without caring about the consequences that come from it. Japan and Germany both thought they would win the war. Therefore, rules and regulations of human rights were not a concern in the long run because they would be the countries that would make the new rules in the future society. Was that the primary reason they did these sexual acts towards these women? Perhaps not, but their extreme nationalism and degradation of anyone

[324] ICRC Database, "Treaties, States Parties and Commentaries," Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949., Article 27 - Treatment I. General observations.
[325] United Nations Treaty Collection, Chapter VII: (3.), *"International Convention of the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children"*, June 15, 1922 [UNTC].
[326] United Nations Treaty Collection, Chapter VII: (3.), *"International Convention of the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children"*, June 15, 1922 [UNTC].

who did not fit their racial national ideology was. Both Japan and Germany cared little for people they deemed unworthy of their values and cultural standards.

The war crimes of Axis nations like Germany and Japan committed crimes that caused human suffering are more familiar, given our larger understanding of crimes against humanity during the conflict. However, such knowledge has overshadowed the reality that the victorious Allied nations also committed human rights violations and war crimes, sexual and otherwise. Axis and Allied powers alike were guilty of sexual assault against people during the war. Each country went about it differently, and by no means did every soldier participate in sexual violations. However, the sad truth is that it did happen, and some soldiers took advantage of defenseless people for their personal acts of pleasure. Despite the clear violation of international treaties and accords, many people were not held accountable for their actions. It was a crime, it seemed, without actual consequences. Japan, Germany, the United States of America, and the Soviet Union all committed this type of crime against humanity.

It is an unpleasant truth that sexual violence and assault happen during war, and World War II was no exception. The stories seem to be more hidden from the public unless a person is looking for the subject, and proof is not easy to obtain. So many people have suffered only to survive with physical and emotional scars; others are sadly killed because of these types of crimes. How many stories were told? Moreover, how many were not? Historians can make estimates, but they will not ever know the true numbers of those who were sexually violated. Countries would not admit or release that information because it is not a crime that anyone wants to admit to. Soldiers are more than willing to share their stories of bloodshed, hardships, and glory, but the probability of a soldier talking about sexuality-violating women is slim to none. That would not look good on them or their country. Survivors of these crimes can share and

recount their stories all they want, but in the end, it is about who acknowledges the truth of what happened to them. Those who are dead, with no voice, had stories that will never be heard. History will never know what happened to them and what they endured. The only people knowing the truth would be the aggressors, who more than likely will never tell their participation in sexual violence and assaults on the innocent.

This area of study for sexual crimes during World War II needs to be researched and more need to be recognized, be they survivors or those who have died. Although hard to hear, their stories should be given a voice in our history. Their suffering should be recognized and seen, not forgotten, because the nature of what they endured is too heinous for some people to hear. What the victims went through matters; they are more than "stories." They are or were human souls who experienced something unimaginable, whose lives were forever changed, and who have the right to be acknowledged. By the countries giving recognition to the victims of sexual crimes committed by soldiers during World War II and accepting some accountability for the horrific deeds of the past, they could use this knowledge to address, expose, and even prevent this type of sexual crimes in the future.

By no means was this thesis created to bring hate into the countries mentioned throughout this paper. It was to inform and broaden the field to future studies of such taboo subjects and the victims that had to endure or were unable to tell their stories, in the words of Historian George Hicks:

> The plight of comfort women was not of major concern to the powers fighting World War II. Nor has it proved of interest to its historians. There is no monument to the unknown comfort women as there are monuments everywhere to the unknown soldier.[327]

[327] George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 11.

Though his words primarily focus on the Comfort Women, it too could be broadened to both sides of the war. Rape and sexual violence weren't isolated events that happened in one area of the war, nor was it a one-time "thing." When looking over this taboo subject, remember that it's not the "number" of sexual assault victims throughout World War II but the crime itself that's important, as mentioned earlier in this thesis. The statistics and numbers give a part of the picture but not the whole truth, nor do they give the full picture of the crimes committed. When it comes to war crimes that unfolded on people or others who experienced severe suffering and torture during the war, we should not think in terms of numbers but instead in terms of humanity. There is a reason why such atrocities towards other humans are considered a human rights violation, and those who act with a sense of impunity to basic humanity should be punished. The victims are human; they're not a number, and their experiences should be seen beyond just statistics. Not to do so is unfair to both the survivors and the deceased victims.

When reading and researching books, articles, etc., for this thesis, the information either focuses on one side or the other side of the war. Dividing the crimes into either the Pacific or the European war and only briefly mentioning the other side. If they decide to talk about the other theatre, perhaps there would only be one page or two if lucky, but generally, it was divided into just one area of location. It is understandable, they were two very different war experiences. Yet there are similarities to them both. When looking over World War II and sexual violence, it was always divided, never together. This is where this paper comes in, trying to find a bigger understanding of this war crime, piecing it together as a whole and not a division in the hemisphere. All the sexual assault victims suffered the same crime and had no real justice given to them on either side. It should also be pointed out and stressed: these young girls, boys, women, and men who were raped, sexually abused, or assaulted may not have the same stories

and experiences but live with the same emotional scars. By bringing both sides' stories together in this thesis, we can see the full scale of the sexual crimes committed by both the Axis and Allied forces, which left destruction just as any other weapon of war.

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